

**PERFORMANCE, TRANCE,
POSSESSION AND MYSTICISM:
An Analysis of the *Rātib al-Rif ā'īyyah*
in South Africa**

by

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SUMMARY

Following the school of biogenetic structuralism, this cross-cultural, multidisciplinary study of trance rituals in three subjugated peoples in South Africa: the Khoisan, Malay exiles and slaves and Indian 'indentured labourers' reveals a congruence in the outcomes of the rituals. The Khoisan utilised their nightly dance rituals for healing, divination, and rainmaking, whilst the Hindu performed the fire-walking *Draupadi* ritual for aleatory purposes and in the *Kavadi* ritual, the devotees pierced themselves with hooks and skewers through the tongue as a form of penitence. The *Kavadi* is analogous to the Muslim ritual of the *Ratib*. Muslims pierced themselves with skewers, and played with swords and fire to the accompaniment of chanting and drums. The Khoisan attributed the trance to achieving *n/um*, the Hindus claimed that a goddess possessed them, whilst the Muslims maintained that their piety conducted a heirophany. Despite the disparate origins and the diversity in explication there is a biological isomorphism among these rituals. The biogenetic structuralist school holds that rituals are part of an adaptive process which enabled the subjugated to overcome intolerable hardship.

Previous phenomenological studies on the *Ratib* being narrowly focussed, failed to recognise that it is part of a 'ritual complex', and based on information from incompetent devotees, are erroneous in many respects. Muslims themselves could not discern its 'mystic mask'. Many imams and academics considered the *Ratib* not 'to be a part of Islam', since a Hindu origin was ascribed to it, yet the verbal aspects were from the Qur'an. Previous studies have not considered the sociopolitical aspects of the *Ratib*.

There are four dramatic rituals constituting the *Ratib*-complex, the gyratory performance of the Whirling Dervishes of Konya, the ludic mourning ritual of the *Ta'ziyyah* protesting the injustices perpetrated against the Prophet's household, whilst the *Ratib* is based on the religious experience of its founder at the Prophet's tomb in Medina. The *Zurkhaneh* ritual demonstrates the attainment of stupendous physical strength through invocation. Since the public and private expressions of Islam were banned at the Cape on pain of death by the authorities, the *Ratib* was a protest ritual dissimulated as entertainment. The social role of the *Ratib* amongst the early Muslims maintained devotionism in the nascent community, assisted in coping with stress and influenced many slaves converting to Islam. It so impressed deviant street children, that the 'skollies' became saints. The ritual was a 'politicisation of mysticism' and was a unique expression of Muslim piety in local context. The *Ratib* includes several elements of the

Ta'ziyyah such as the use of flags, drums, street demonstrations and fire displays. The binding element of these rituals is the *dhikr*, a recital of passages from the Qur'an and other invocations. By tracing the associated rituals of the *Ratib* from the *hadra* which is a private 'household' ritual, to the *Ratib* which is a public ritual presented as drama, an elucidation of the meanings of the various sacraments used in the *Ratib* was achieved that was not possible in a sharply focussed investigation by earlier researchers. It also fulfils earlier requisites that the scriptural and medical aspects of the *Ratib* be elicited.

Our study is an advance as it elucidates the neurobiological aspects of Islamic ritual that is panspecific to all ritual. It reveals that Islamic ritual is remarkably 'structured' to enter what Felicitas Goodman termed 'alternate reality'. The recitals from the Qur'an provide 'sound art' through harmonic triggers for inducing trance. Secular rhythmic activity such as performed by road runners and hard rock musicians further substantiate the view that trance states have a biological substructure endowed to *Homo sapiens*, who alone, by virtue of encephalisation and symbol cognition can voluntarily alter his state of consciousness.

Bushell's research on Christian eremiticism in Ethiopia enabled us to elicit a neurobiological continuum and a nexus between trance ritual, asceticism, mysticism and possession states. The discipline of psychoneuro-immunology facilitated the elucidation of the basis of ritual and of ascetic practices to be the activation of endorphins resulting in altered states of consciousness.

Since an exorcism rite, the *Zar* practised in North Africa utilised the *ratib* as therapy, our scope had to be widened to include possession states. By surveying some cases of *Jinn* possession amongst Muslims, analogous to the *Amafufuyana* in the Transkei, we elicit that whilst trance is a homoversal physiological response, possession states are pathological due to protracted, intensive production of opioids resulting from an inability to cope with stress. Possession states, such as the *Amafufuyana* are a deep-seated neural defence mechanism against impending psychosis.

Since it is the stimulation of the immune system by stress, which results in the 'trance', our research points to advances in the therapy of stress related disorders. Felicity Edwards details a syncretic method of exorcism for the *Amafufuyana* based on Christian theology, but our serendipitous finding is that an anti-opioid injection is more specific and efficacious. Ritual and anti-opioid therapy are indicated for a host of behavioural dysfunctions such as anorexia nervosa; perhaps in the treatment of Schizophrenia which the mystics regard as an altered state of consciousness; whilst augmentation of opioids are

indicated in all the auto-immune diseases, such as lupus erythematosus, asthma, arthritides and as a naturally produced analgesic and anaesthetic. It may play its greatest role in Aids, as ritual stimulates the immune system, whilst HIV causes a depression of it. These are avenues for further research beyond the present scope.

Just as the shamans were magicians, exorcists and miracle workers, the imams were healers, but they relied on the Qur'an as *verbum Dei* having ontic capacity, and employed the sacred words written in saffron for healing purposes. Their greatest contribution was to act as religious functionaries, teaching the Qur'an *pro Deo* and sustaining Islam during its first century of prohibition at the Cape.

The *Ratib* continues to flourish under the shadows of Table Mountain despite the *animus* from the textualist clerisy. Islam flowers when it is suppressed, as shown by the early Muslims who have contributed immeasurably to the prosperity of the Cape, by the creolisation of Dutch to originate the language and influence the culture of the Afrikaners. It is only a return to the *eros*-orientated experiential expression of Islam in contrast to the codified *nomos*-orientated formalistic that could provide an impetus to carry the Muslims into the next century, where as Marshall Hodgson remarked, the great challenge of the Qur'an awaits them.

We substantiate Bushell's findings but advance them to a cellular and immunological level and confirm that indigenous ritual is an invaluable resource for all societies in transition in coping with the increased stresses predicted for the coming millennium.

In the Name of the Beneficent and Merciful.

Dedication

To the slaves who kept Islam alive
at the Cape for posterity,
To all the Imams and Khulafa'
of
the *Ratib al-Rifā' ryyah* who opened
their hearts and revealed
the treasures of Islam,
May Allah bless the fuqara'
Ameen.

'wa ma taufiqi illa billahi'

Acknowledgements.

It is with sadness that I have to terminate this study which brought me into contact with the great saints and scholars of the Cape and who enriched my religious life beyond estimation.

I am indebted to all the academics who welcomed me into their circle and unstintedly gave of their time and their ideas, amongst them Achmat Davids, Yasien Mohamed, Ebrahim Moosa, Abdulkadir Tayob, Rashid Omar, Shaikh Sa'dullah Khan, Yusuf da Costa, their students and staff. It was an unforgettable experience studying within the hallowed precincts of the *karamats*, where a spirit of tolerance and earnest endeavour prevails towards learning, justice, reconciliation and equity. Shaikh Burhanuddin of ICOSA assisted greatly in library facilities, whilst Reshad Jedaar and Faik Gamielien assisted in the printing of this work.

I am indeed grateful to Fatima and Yusuf Rahim of Rylands who generously cared for all my needs when I first arrived in Cape Town. I have to thank Ruxanna and Shabbir for the unbounded hospitality, offering their home as home and for fulfilling my every whim, and to Riaz and Shaheena for releasing me from an onerous medical practice to explore pastures and enlightenment beyond description. I am deeply indebted to my wife Sara who bore up with the dislocations and disruptions of frequent travel and the long hours of enforced loneliness with great patience.

Lastly, but not the least, any acclaim should go to my Supervisor, Professor David Chidester, who nurtured and honed my writing skills, who had his finger on the pulse of the subject and allowed me the necessary latitude to cross boundaries. Without his immense erudition and encouragement this project would never have seen the light of day, and finally Shahaheb Syed Ali Akbar Shah for the numerous discussions, who took me under his wing and opened up the glorious world of *tasawwuf*. For providing me with the text of the *Ratib* I am indeed beholden to Shaikh Gamielien of Bosmont, and Dr Anvir Hoosenmia of Mafeking for the text of his sodality. To the many whom I have not mentioned, be assured you have not been forgotten in my prayers.

May Allah grant the best of rewards to all. *Ameen.*

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Given the new dispersion, many have taken other approaches: structuralism, neopositivism, neo-Marxism, micro-micro descripticism, macro-macro system building and that curious combination of common sense and common nonsense, sociobiology.¹

South Africa is unique in many respects. Its polychromatic and pluralistic society recently exemplified to the political world the miracle of reconciliation and forgiveness.² In the social field its population ranges from the earliest of man - perhaps the only living 'hunter gatherers, in existence' - pejoratively termed the Bushman; to the indigenous African population, classified racially as 'black', to first world social structures and technological advancement as evinced by European colonialists categorised by the ruling authorities as 'white'. From the East, Malay slaves and prisoners were exiled to the Cape and indentured labourers were brought from India to tame and coax the wild bush of Natal into lush plantations. These added further colour to the 'rainbow nation'.

The beliefs prevalent meander from the pre-literate Khoisan expression of the sacred, to the primordial African traditions, to the triad of the Abrahamic faiths, the Christian, the Jewish and the Muslim to end in the highly philosophical Hindus who mainly follow the Sanathanist tradition in South Africa. It is thus to be expected that the diversity of beliefs will also display the most variant expressions and explications of religious practices.

Our study will be focussed on a certain kind of ritual performed in South Africa, prosaically termed 'trance', starting from those night-long drumming dances of the Khoisan, proceeding to the spear 'carrying' of the *Kavadi* and the *Draupadi*, a fire-walking ritual of the Hindu and culminating in a more detailed analysis of the

¹Clifford Geertz, 'Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought,' in *The American Scholar* 49 (Spring 1980), 525.

²Patti Waldmeir, *Anatomy of a Miracle: Photojournalistic Essay on the Transition in South Africa* (New York: W. Norton, 1997).

dramatic performances of sword play and skewer piercing amongst the Muslims, the *Ratib al Rifa'iyya*.³ The Muslim slaves and political prisoners from the Far East, who were exiled to the Cape from the earliest time of Dutch rule, (1652-1807), were faced with a 'plakaat' banning the public and *private* expression of 'any religion other than that of the Reformed Protestant church' punishable by execution.⁴ They resorted to the performance of a dramatic ritual, playing with swords, skewers, and drums accompanied by what was described as 'raucous singing'. The officials misread the ritual as 'entertainment'.

The Indians were imported by the English in 1860 to cultivate the sugar fields in Natal as 'indentured labourers'.⁵ Henning describes the term as 'a euphemism for the most harsh form of slavery'.⁶ They resorted to the *Kavadi* ritual, piercing themselves with skewers and 'carrying' fruit and flowers suspended on hooks, whilst in an analogous ritual, performed the fire-walking *Draupadi* ceremony. These rites were practised mainly by women who were 'at the very bottom of the class-race-gender hierarchy in colonial Natal' which led Judith Tobler to comment that: 'they were undeniably oppressed as indentured labour, but they were also undeniably doubly

³We shall be using the abbreviated form of *Ratib* henceforth for the performance of the *Ratib al-Rifa'iyya* and *Ratib* (plural *rawatib*), Arabic, an arrangement of verses, for the recitals. Desai claims that the commonly used term *Ratiep*, is a South African derivation. It is however a Malay corruption originating from the Far East.

⁴J. Alton Templin. *Ideology on a Frontier: The Theological Foundations of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1652-1910*. (London : Greenwood Press. 1984):63ff. In 1642 the decree issued read: 'in prescribed lands no other service of religion shall be allowed, much less taught or propagated, whether privately or public, than the Reformed Christian faith which is taught in the churches of the United Netherlands...whoever teaches another religion shall be banned from the land, or be punished'. Quoted in C. van Geldered. *Kerk en Sending in Suid-Afrika* (Amsterdam: van Battenberg, 1923):60.' Compare Achmat Davids. *The Mosques of Bo-Kaap*. (Cape Town: A.I.I.R. 1980): 36. who states 'though they were allowed to practice in private' which conflicts with the above. The era of liberalism had not reached the Netherlands, when Governor John Maetsuycker re-issued 'the same plakaat on 23rd August 1657.' Perhaps Davids is referring to the British occupation (1795), as the law in later times, although not rescinded, was not executed.

⁵Fatima Meer, *Portrait of Indian South Africans* (Durban: Avon Press.1969), 10.

⁶C.G. Henning, *The Indentured Indian in Natal 1860-1917* (New Delhi: Promilla,1993),2.

oppressed for being women.'⁷ All of these downtrodden and weak communities, utilised trance rituals for their 'adaptive' function, to inculcate solace and stability in their socially discriminated, disrupted and dispossessed lives.⁸

The interpretations and explications of these rituals are just as diverse. To the Khoi-san, they were primarily techniques for rainmaking, divination and healing. The trance was attributed to the power (*n/um*) possessed by the great God, *Gao-Na* whose 'energy is so great that were he to come near, his *nu/m* would kill'.⁹ The Muslim devotees claimed that the 'presence of the sacred' - a heirophany, protected them from harm whilst the Hindus were convinced that the monkey-god *Hamuman* 'possessed them'.¹⁰

Despite the dissimilarity in beliefs there is a congruence of ritualistic phenomena amongst the three traditions surveyed in our study as evinced in 'trance ritual'. Trance rituals in the three traditions, we reveal, are but diverse methods for inducing altered states of consciousness.¹¹ As Eliade demonstrated shamanistic

⁷ Judith Tobler, *Feminine Principles, Women's Practices: A Comparative Study of Ecstatic States in Zulu Tradition and Hinduism in Natal*. BA. Hons. Thesis. (University of Cape Town.1993), 20. A recent press article reported women being banned from attending the Draupadi Festival in Maritzburg. The spokesman claimed that he was not discriminating against women. Pietermaritzburg, Natal. (*Sunday Times Extra*. (May 12-1996), 1.

⁸In fairness to the Dutch colonists, their first Governor, a surgeon Jan van Riebeeck 'adopted' some of the young Khoi-khoi in his own home and educated them. Amongst these, Eva is well known as she learnt to read and write fluent Dutch and was employed as an interpreter. After Van Riebeeck's departure in 1662, she married a Danish surgeon. However the assimilation was not successful, as it resulted in her and others, becoming alcoholics. She died on Robben Island prison. Richard Elphick & Hermann Gilliomee, *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller,[1979] 1992), 186.

⁹ Richard Katz, *Boiling Energy* (London: Harvard University Press, 1982), 95.

¹⁰ Alleyn Diesel & Patrick Maxwell.(eds) *Hinduism in Natal* (Pietermaritburg: University Natal Press,1993),47.

¹¹ According to the Qur'an: 'We have established for every nation rites which it practices', (22:66) and elsewhere: 'We make no distinction between the messengers of God' (2:284). Thus all the traditions of mankind are within the ambit of the 'sacred'. However, in Islam, ritual has a 'patterned structure', originating as Revelation enshrined as the Qur'an and exemplified by the Prophet (*Uswa*).

practices are but 'techniques for ecstasy'.¹²

Specific Reasons for undertaking this study

Our specific focus on the ritual of the early Muslims reveals the presence of profound misconceptions, both amongst the Muslims and in the two academic works previous to ours. Amongst the former, these range from 'nothing to do with Islam', that it is a ritual of 'Buddhism', or that it is 'a prototypical animistic ritual' to the prevailing views amongst contemporary Muslims, because it is presented in a dramatic form, that it is nothing but 'entertainment'. Amongst the latter, there are many erroneous attributions due to the inability of the *Ratib* adepts to explain their experience competently. Academic workers, uninformed in Islamic tradition could not filter the authentic from the inauthentic and assume every explanation and detail given as veracious.¹³ The Imams who gave evidence at the Roubaix Commission instigated in 1854 for the purpose of banning the performance of the *Ratib* claimed that the ritual was 'not found mentioned in any religious manual', whilst one Imam stated that 'it brought disgrace to our religion' and thus had no qualms about its prohibition.¹⁴ A popular medical writer suggested that it is 'drug induced, was not to be regarded as a part of Islam'.¹⁵ The majority of contemporary Imams regard it as heretical and discourage discussion of it or participation in its performance.¹⁶ What was surprising is that an authority and author-exponent on Sufism averred that the '*Ratib* was an

¹² Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (Princeton: Univ Princeton Press, 1964).

¹³ Desai was informed by one of the sheikhs, that when a person enters into a trance, '*hy is tariqat*'. The term refers to the mystical path in Islam. The technical term for trance is *hal*, which is commonly employed by the mystics.

¹⁴ J.S. de Lima, *De Kalifa: Versameling van Memories, Verklarings, en andere Papieren, in verband met het Onderzoek omtrent het viere der Kalifa. with English translation: The Chalifa Question* (Cape Town: Van der Sandt de Villiers, 1856), xiii + 57 pages.

¹⁵ Cassim d'Arcy, 'The Ratiep' in *Muslim Views*, (Cape Town: 1994) What was probably meant is that it was not part of the *Fara'id*, (compulsory) rituals, or the five pillars of Islam'.

¹⁶ Responses of the Muslim Judicial Council and the President of the Islamic Council of South Africa, the late Shaikh Abubakr Najaar who condemned the performance of the ritual are elaborated in Desai's thesis.

illusion, and not an element of Sufism'.¹⁷ Here he is in the patrician company of none less than Professor Lynn Gillis who considers the *Ratib* to be mainly skilful swordplay and exhibitionism. Dr. Abdulkadir Tayob of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town also proposed the scrutiny of a similar hypothesis.¹⁸ The *Ratib* has not been investigated academically by a Muslim as a Trance ritual in South Africa. Only scanty references to the ritual are to be found in *encyclopaedia*. Hughe's *Dictionary of Islam* has a short paragraph on the theological *Ratib* as being a superogatory prayer. Eliade's *Encyclopaedia of Religion* has two entries, no more than seven lines each. Gibbs' and Kramers' *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Religion* has almost a whole page on the *al-Rifa'iyya*. In Mukkadam's thesis, which surveys Common Muslim religious practices at the Cape, previous works such as Chambers' on the *Ratib* were not consulted. The *Ratib* has been disregarded by Mukkadam, as he confined his analysis to a presumed definition of 'popular *Muslim* practices'.

The status of *Ratib* having been a core ritual during the first century of Muslim presence at the Cape and still enjoying a renewed following in recent times, was not recognised. This may have been due to current misconceptions of the ritual as derived from Buddhistic practices and thus not within the ambit of a study on Islam.¹⁹ It may also be ascribed to the fact that a leading researcher, Achmat Davids, declared it to be a Hindu ritual in an earlier book.²⁰ In her classic work, *Indian South Africans*, Fatima Meer classifies the *Ratib* as an unorthodox Islamic cult. By deriving the name from 'rathie', (a stave) she ascribed a *Gugerati* derivation to it, claiming that it was an adaptation of Sufism to an Indian genre.²¹ The origin of *Ratib* was initially from the

¹⁷ Fadlullah Haeri, *Elements of Sufi* (London: Element Books, 1990), 74. He doubts if the *Ratib* is a mystical practice.

¹⁸ Personal Communication, after having jointly attended a *Ratib* performance at Strandfontein. If further associated rituals were witnessed, such as playing with molten chains, perhaps a different conclusion would have been reached. Fire-walking cannot be regarded as a skilful walk.

¹⁹ Ahmed Mukadam, *Muslim Common Religious Practices at the Cape*. MA Thesis. (University of Cape Town, 1990).

²⁰ Achmat Davids, *The Mosques of Bo-Kaap* (Cape Town: I.A.A.I.R. 1984), 33.

²¹ Fatima Meer, *Portrait of Indian South Africans* (Durban: Avon, 1962), 205.

town of Umm Abida in the marshlands of Northern Iraq, the burial place of Shaikh Ahmed al-Kabir al-Rifa'i, the founder of the mystical order of the *Rifa'iyya*, and historically it originated from an experience of its founder in Medina, the very heartland of Islam.²² Two recent works, by Robin Chambers and Desmond Desai, the former from an anthropological perspective, and the latter by an ethnomusicologist, contain responses from performers, which in many instances do not accord with the information obtained by the present researcher from more informed sources.²³ These studies however have located the *Ratib* to be indeed a part of Islamic mystical practice. Haeri observes that the outer forms of Sufism are dependant on local socio-political conditions and in India, Muslims adopted variants of Hindu ceremonies.²⁴ The inclusion of music as in some of the *Sama'*, is also of Indian origin.²⁵ Geertz claims that 'cultural performances' of Islam as seen in Java, 'arose as a counter tradition'... 'the major style being theatre'.²⁶ The theatrical aspects of the *Ratib* however were not Indian. We shall locate the *Ratib* in the framework of Islam, as a ritual of the mystics.

General Reasons for Undertaking this Study:

Charles J. Adam in a foreword to Richard Martin's edited collection, *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*, states that 'Historians of religions have failed to advance our knowledge and understanding of Islam as religion and Islamists have failed to explain adequately Islamic religious phenomena'.²⁷ Antoun concurs by remarking that although the Islamic tradition plays such a large role in the Middle East and across the communities 'be they nomadic, rural and urban, it is surprising that it

²² Haji Syed Zainul Abedin, *Guncha-e-Rifa'iyya* (Urdu) (Karachi: Jadid Press, n.d).

²³ Desai was informed by one of the Imams that when a person enters into a trance '*hy is tariqat*'. The term refers to the mystical path, the technical term for a trance is *hal* (state of consciousness).

²⁴ Fadlullah Haeri, *Elements of Sufism*, 74.

²⁵ Desmond Desai, *Thesis*, 175. However, Schimmel, *Phenomenology*, 104. states that the sama' was institutionalised by the Qaderiyya in the ritual of the whirling derwishes.

²⁶ Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed* (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1968), 42. Geertz claims that 'Sunni Islam still does not represent the spiritual mainstream in Indonesia'.

²⁷ Richard Martin, ed. *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (Tucson: University Arizona Press, 1985), vii.

has been subjected to so scant attention'.²⁸ We attempt to remedy this hiatus by focussing on an Islam 'in local context', concentrated on the southern tip of Africa. Following Martin's injunction, traditional Islamic 'studies have almost exclusively had a textual and philological orientation' but should rather be on an 'Islam as it is experienced and lived by members of the community'.²⁹ Our focus is on a 'core ritual' performed from the beginning of Muslim exile in South Africa some three hundred and forty years ago to the present. In this period the typology of Islam manifested a transition from being mystical, *tariqah-centric* to the legalistic, formalised *sharia^c h-centric* expression.³⁰ Ebrahim Moosa implores that the 'saint cult' of early Islam in South Africa should not be underestimated', and 'despite the ambiguity between the two expressions, they co-existed amicably'.³¹ Abdulkader Tayob, considering the sociopolitical climate at the Cape, deduces that the 'Cape was home to a widely dispersed militant mysticism during the eighteenth century'.³² It was not until 1804 that the liberal Governor de Mist pleaded for equal treatment to all religions, and the report of the Briggs and Colebrook Commission lauded that it was only during the first British occupation that the Cape Malay community was 'allowed the right of public worship'.³³ This led to the 'establishment' of 'normative' Islam.³⁴ Tensions

²⁸ Richard T Antoun, 'Anthropology' in *The Study of the Middle East* ed. Leonard Binder, (New York: John Wiley, 1976), 159.

²⁹ Richard Martin, *Approaches*, ix.

³⁰We discourse below that Mystical Islam, i.e. *Tariqah* or esoteric aspects, cannot exist without the legalistic framework enshrined in the *Shari'ah*. Annemarie Schimmel is emphatic that 'mysticism pervades Islamic life'. See Annemarie Schimmel, 'Aspects of Mystical Thought in Islam' in *The Islamic Impact*, eds. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, Byron Haines and Ellison Findly. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984), 113.

³¹Ebrahim Moosa, 'Discursive Voices of Diaspora Islam in South Africa' in *Jurnal Anthropologi Dan Sociology*, Vol. 20, (1993), 29-60.

³²Abdulkader Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence in South Africa*, (Cape Town : UCT Press, 1995), 41. Tuan Guru wrote a book on jurisprudence whilst in prison on Robben Island, and interspersed it with *aximats*, (talismans) and sacred cures, based on the power of the sacred word. 'This indicates that his perception of Islam included both the public and open, *Zahiri* aspects of Islam as well as the mystical, *batini* aspects.

³³F. R. Bradlow and Margaret Cairns, *The Early Cape Muslims* (Cape Town: A.Balkema, (continued...)

developed between the earlier 'mystic' expression and the 'scripturalist' groups in later centuries, sometimes erupting into violence and deaths between followers of the two persuasions.³⁵ *Tasawwuf* has always existed since the earliest times of Muslim presence at the Cape, its major exponents being Shaikh Yusuf who belonged to the *Qadiri*, *Khalwati* and *Rifa'iyya* orders, whilst Qadi Abdus Salam, belonged to the '*Alawiyya*'. Shaikh Yusuf had practised the *Ratib* since his title discloses that he was initiated into the *Rifa'iyya* order.³⁶

General Methodology

Antoun recommends that the 'social anthropology of Islam proceed in four directions': Data should be collected at a local level on Islamic beliefs and ritual. Once the data is available, it could be utilised in three directions: to elicit the social organisation of the tradition; or the analysis of the data and beliefs by questioning both the 'learned men' for 'theological interpretations', whilst also examining the participants. The third direction is the analysis of texts, which was hitherto the 'domain of the philologists and historians'. The fourth direction is the study of local politics and interethnic relations. Another area that Antoun included was the 'social anthropologists' focus on the unique and apparently esoteric aspects' of Middle Eastern culture.³⁷

Our study fortuitously does indeed approach the *Ratib* along all these parameters: the early Muslims and their dissimulation of the *Ratib* as theatre; the analysis of the origins of the ritual which are an expression of the mystical aspects of Islam; the analysis of the verbal dimensions which reveals that they are from essential

³³(...continued)
1978),19.

³⁴The definition of what is 'normative' has been regarded as 'textualist' Islam, rather than 'experiential' and will be discussed in a later chapter.

³⁵ At a celebration of the *milad*, the Prophet's birthday in Azaadville, described by Tayob as a 'resurgence of 'folk' Islam in the Transvaal, the 'scholastics' incited students to attack the participants.' Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence*, 73.

³⁶ Suleman Essop Dangor, (ed. and trans.) *Sirr al-Asrar: The Secret of Secrets of Shaykh Yusuf*. (Durban : Centre for Islamic Studies, 1995).

³⁷ Richard Antoun, *Study of the Middle East*, 166.

texts of Islam, and the correlation of the *Ratib* with other rituals in the complex consisting of the *Tazi'ah*, the Whirling Derwishes, and the *Zurkhanah* which constitute the four dramatic rituals of Islam. However, we draw upon Richard Martin's remarks that 'the newer trend in ritual studies is not to identify and isolate ritual data for analysis but rather to locate such data within the broader cultural matrices in which they occur and presumably find their meanings.'³⁸ We discourse on a type of Islamic piety of the early Muslims in South Africa within a politico-social context of deprivation and subjugation, and locate it within its Islamic milieu. The choreographic (dance) and musical analysis of the *Ratib* has been rendered by Desmond Desai.³⁹ However, in the explanation of the ritual, his study contains numerous inaccuracies due to misapprehensions of the adepts. This also applies to Robin Chamber's thesis on the ritual.⁴⁰ Alexandra Willcox, daughter of A. R. Willcox, a noted authority on Bushman cave art, has prepared an Honours thesis at Unisa on the *Ratib* as a ritual which has fewer inaccuracies.⁴¹

The presence of '*die bank*' which Robin Chambers calls the 'altar', is omitted by latter day performers, such as Shaikh Logday who stores his instruments in a *sundug*, a wooden trunk.⁴² Desai reports that the Indian and Chatsworth *Ratibs*, omit the 'bench'. Flags, are likewise not displayed in Indian performances.⁴³ The *julus*, or street processions, the universal verbal recitals, the chains, and fire-displays would have been incomprehensible without a purview of the affiliated rituals ranging from the Shi'a protest ritual of the *Tazi'ah* (chains, flags and street marches), to the *Sama'*, whirling derwishes, the *Zurkhanah* ritual in Iran ('die bank', chains, and extraordinary

³⁸ Richard Martin, ed., *Approaches to Islam*, 61.

³⁹ Desmond Desai, *The Ratiep Artform of the South African Muslim* Ph.D. Thesis. Unpublished. (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal, 1993), 489.

⁴⁰ Robin Chambers, *The Ratiep: A Study in Ritual and Culture* Honours Thesis. University of Cape Town. (1985).

⁴¹ Alexandra Mary Willcox, *Ratiep: A Cape Muslim Ritual* BA. Hons Thesis University of South Africa. (1997).

⁴² Chambers, *Thesis*.

⁴³ Chambers, *Thesis*, 12.

physical feats) contain, what Graham terms a 'central feature' of Islamic ritual, the recitations from the Qur'an.⁴⁴

Thus, a vital element found in the *Zurkhanah* enabled us to solve an enigma of 'die bank' of the *Ratib*. Desai could not elicit the meaning of it or of the flags. He claims a Qura'nic derivation for the flags. According to one of the performers, the black flag denoted pain, whilst the red was symbolic of blood. These attributions have no Qur'anic basis. We do proffer a historical reason for the presence of these different coloured 'sacraments'. The focus therefore had to be widened.⁴⁵ By including an *anlage* of all the *Rawatibs*, the *hadra*, called *sa'man* at the Cape, and touching upon the *Zar* and *Hamadsha* rites, where the *Ratib* serves as a curing rite, we fortuitously intruded into the domain of 'possession states' as well.

The stylised movements of the *hadra* provided the clue to swaying movements performed in the *Ratib*.⁴⁶ Rouguet firmly believes that there is an association between trance and music, in that music causes a spirit to enter into a person, i.e. possession. The latter part of Rouguet's views need revision in the light of progress in the field of trance states and abnormal psychology. Bourguignon uses two differing terms for trance and possession trance, which Rouguet observes has so many nuances that there is a blurring between the two. He is quite adamant that the two conditions are opposites; that shamanic trance and possession trance are two contrasting types of relationship with the invisible.⁴⁷

We prefer the term altered states of consciousness to denote all these diverse phenomena, and regard trance to be a normal physiological reaction to certain stimuli, whilst 'possession' is a manifestation of an inability to cope with stress, an abnormal

⁴⁴William A. Graham, 'Islam in the Mirror of Ritual'. Hounissian and Vryonis eds. *Islam's Understanding of Itself*. (Malibu: Undene Publications, 1983), 53-71.

⁴⁵ A narrow focus, such as recent studies on the *Ratib* by Robin Chambers (BA. Hons Thesis 1985) UCT and that by Desmond Desai (PhD Thesis. University Natal 1993) have been inadequate in 'explanation and interpretation' of the ritual.

⁴⁶As early as 1861 it was observed that these 'movements' represent different aspects of prayer, the *Salat*. 'The Khalifa' in *Cape Monthly Magazine* (July 1861), 356-359.

⁴⁷Gilbert Rouguet, *Music and Trance: A theory of the relationship between Music and Possession* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984), 18.

psychological reaction, as has been so admirably demonstrated by Felicity Edwards.⁴⁸ Our widened focus therefore accords with the demands of the Biogenetic structuralist school that any explication should traverse a wide field of phenomenology, and be multi disciplinary and cross cultural, thus displaying a homoversal neurobiological foundation as well.

At the Cape, the public expression of Islam was banned and the punishment for infringement was execution by drowning, or left hanging from a tree as an abject deterrent, or suffering an excruciating death on the rack. It was thus imperative that the normative expressions of Islam be subsumed, and that a ritual of the mystics surface in a form thought to be 'entertainment'. This is a well-known phenomenon in Islam as observed by Voll in the socialist countries of the Soviet Union and China.⁴⁹ Where *shari'ah* is suppressed, it is *tariqah* which rises up. There too, the topology or expression of Islam was altered to accord with the socio-political reality.

In South Africa, the interethnic context was salient when the sociopolitical dimensions are considered which reveal the *Ratib*, presented as theatre by the slaves, to have been the first protest ritual.⁵⁰ Comparatively, slaves in other parts of the world could not organise themselves since they were separated geographically to distant corners and hence could neither mobilise themselves to seek redress nor liberate themselves from the inhuman conditions.⁵¹ They also did not have a theistic mode of life based on revealed text, nor could they resort to 'structured' adaptive rituals.

Although our study had to examine ritual in Islam, it unpacks the definition of

⁴⁸Felicity S. Edwards, 'Amafufuyana Spirit Possession: Treatment and Interpretation.' in GC Oosthuizen et al., eds. *Afro-Christian Religion and Healing in Southern Africa*. (Wales, UK: Mellen Press, 1989), 207-26.

⁴⁹J.O.Voll, 'Integration or Isolation of Muslim Societies' in J.L.Esposito, *Islam in Asia*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 135. A recent example is that of Chechnya, formerly part of the USSR, now called Ichkeria. The society based on the *Naqsbandi Sufi Tariqas* is highly structured and disciplined. 'The *Naqsbandis* are famed for their *Jihadi* spirit...by their valiant resistance to Russian occupation for 200 years and final victory.' *The Crescent*. (Toronto, 16-6-1997), 6.

⁵⁰Bradlow has located Muslim resistance to problems with health regulations, and Farid Esack asserts that this resistance was 'the first urban uprising' in the history of South Africa. We have shown that the *Ratib*, a religious expression, was much earlier, dissimulated as 'theatre'. Farid Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism*. (London: Oneworld, 1997), 45 fn. 9.

⁵¹N. Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa* (Cambridge: C.U.P, 1985), 135.

Islam as 'religion', it focuses on the 'mystical' elements: a trance ritual, the *Ratib al-Rifa'iyya*, and also overarches possession states. It therefore has achieved a unified field far beyond our heuristic expectations since it provides a unitary explication embracing Islamic ritual as part of asceticism, trance rituals, possession states, mysticism (*tasawwuf*) and stress syndromes such as the *Amafufuyana* occurring amongst the indigenous people.

Aim of the Study

We wish to place the *Ratib* within the context of an Islamic ritual, since it is based on 'essentialist texts', and propose an alternate hypothesis for the phenomenology of the *Ratib*. Previous studies on the *Ratib* have concerned themselves with 'thick' description. Trance rituals are ubiquitous homoversal phenomena, but because of their complexity and diverse presentations, no attempt at a unified view was previously feasible since previous investigations did not span across several disciplines, or embrace several cultures.⁵² As suggested in his conclusion, Desai calls for the necessity of a cross-cultural study of trance rituals in local traditions coupled with a medical perspective to reach a comprehensive resolution of the *Ratib*. Professor Lynn Gillis, Head of Psychiatry at the University of Cape Town, working with Desai, suggested that the lack of bleeding in the ritual was due to changes in blood clotting time; the increased ability of the clotting mechanism prevented bleeding. He examined blood clotting times. Since his results were inconclusive, he admitted that his hypothesis 'would have to be rethought' and doubted if anyone would do medical studies in the future on the *Ratib*. As our study fulfills these two imperatives, it is an advance on previous works on the *Ratib*.

The pioneering study of Bourguignon found trance states to be present in all cultures and have been described as a 'universal shamanic principle'.⁵³ Kruger confirms her findings that the 'shamanic states are invariant and present in all cultures and it is only recently that academic studies have recognised that trance rituals to be

⁵² D. H. Salman in his concluding remarks on the Conference discussing Trances and Possession said that there was an 'absolute necessity of studying such behaviour on a variety of different levels'. Raymond Prince, ed. *Trance and Possession States* (Montreal: R. M. Bucke, 1968), 197-200.

⁵³ Erika Bourguignon, *Religion, Altered States of Consciousness and Social Change* (Columbus: Ohio State University. 1973), 11.

a neurobiological phenomenon.⁵⁴ Abdulkader Tayob described it as a mystical ritual, but asserted that it could not be justified by the Qur'an or Hadith.⁵⁵ We wish to elucidate the nexus between the *Ratib* as a mystical rite within the framework of ritual in Islam.

Karen Armstrong has stressed the fact, as asserted in the Qur'an, that Islam is not a new, alien tradition, but a continuation and refinement of previous traditions.⁵⁶ This is affirmed by Ebrahim Moosa, who states that is 'rather a purification and reconstitution of the unique monotheistic religion, provided by the Creator for humankind from the beginning'.⁵⁷ For Muslims then, Islam is the name of a civilisation and a way of life which requires a dynamic response to the transcendent. It is not a religion in the limited modern sense, as every moment of a Muslim's life has to be moulded along a theocentric basis.⁵⁸ This basis termed '*ibadah*, an act of worship, poses a problem in ritual studies, since even a smile is considered to be an '*ibadah*. Adams concedes it is 'impossible to draw a line between those facets of Islamic experiences that are religious, and those that are not'.⁵⁹

We consider the *Ratib* to be an act of worship, and from a phenomenological approach to Islamic ritual, our aim is to show that the *Ratib* is indeed Islamic, a ritual belonging to a mystical school of the *Rifa'iyya*. We show that the *Ratib* played a very major role in the lives of the early Muslims. It enabled them to effectively cope with stress, led to a sense of empowerment, fostered brotherhood and belonging amongst slaves who were from diverse lands and cultures. The ritual sustained the beliefs of the

⁵⁴J.S. Kruger, *Along Edges: Religion in South Africa - Bushman, Christian and Buddhist* (Pretoria: Unisa, 1995), 283.

⁵⁵ Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence in South Africa*, 48. Suleman Dangor claims that whilst the recitals are Islamic, the performance is not. S. Dangor, 'The Expression of Islam in South Africa.' in *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*. 17:1. (April 1997), 141-151.

⁵⁶ Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet*. (London: Gollanz, 1995), 95.

⁵⁷Ebrahim Moosa, 'Islam' in John de Gruchy and Martin Prozesky eds. *A Southern African Guide to World Religions* (Cape Town: David Phillip, 1991), 203.

⁵⁸Charles Adams, *The Study of the Middle East*, 29.

⁵⁹ Charles Adams, *The Study of the Middle East*,

nascent community for a century and a half by promoting devotionism. It defied all odds against their survival. It conflated those scholars within the Islamic clerisy, who predicted that, without a mosque and associated structures, Islam could not survive in an alien environment.⁶⁰

There is enough evidence that mystical practice and normative Islam are actually integral.⁶¹ This in stark contrast to assertions that mysticism in Islam is a 'foreign plant in the sandy soil of Islam' or as a 'Neoplatonic borrowing', as claimed by R. A. Nicholson and most of the earlier scholars. Tor Andrae is a notable exception.⁶²

We can thus postulate that the dualism between the mystical and the normative, is an anthropological construct. This view is also fostered in Muslim countries from political rather than theological motives. However, most of the Islamic authorities have convincingly argued that the nexus between *Tariqah*, the esoteric, and the *Shari'ah*, the regnant legalistic, normative expression and interpretation of Islam, are as integral as two sides of a coin.⁶³

William Graham claimed that 'Islamic studies have contributed little to and profited little from the phenomenological study of religion'.⁶⁴ Our research is an attempt to unravel the enigma posed to western scholars in the study of Islamic ritual, since Richard Martin claimed that 'the lack of myth in Islam' precluded the

⁶⁰M.Ali Kettani, *Muslim Minorities in the World Today*. (London: Mansell, 1986), 5-20.

⁶¹The origins of mysticism are rooted in Islam. See Annemarie Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God: A phenomenological Approach to Islam* (Albany: SUNY, 1994). S.H. Nasr's chapter entitled 'The *Tariqah*: The Spiritual Path and its Qur'anic Roots' in *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1975), 121-146. He competently establishes that the origins of Islam were ascetic leading to mysticism.

⁶²Tor Andrae, *In the Garden of Myrtles: Studies in Early Islamic Mysticism* (New York: SUNY, 1987), viii. The quotation by Annemarie Schimmel is her foreward to this work.

⁶³Many renowned scholars are critical of the malpractices of the mystics of Islam. A. Tayob writes: 'Al-Faruqi has probably made the strongest statement on the anathema of Islam to Sufism. (sic). Not all Islamicists share his passion, but there is a widespread notion that some of the institutions of Sufism are responsible for much of the problems in Islamic societies.' A. Tayob, *Resurgence*, 38. fn. 6. It is arguable that it is rather the 'textualists' who are responsible for controversy, to the extent of inciting murder. Tayob, *Resurgence*, 73.

⁶⁴William Graham, 'Qur'an as Spoken Word' in Richard Martin. (ed)., *Approaches*, 23.

'comparative study of Islamic ritual'.⁶⁵ Perhaps ours is the first attempt at elucidating the neurobiological effects of Islamic ritual in a way which is panspecific to all ritual.

Scope of the Study

Contemporary studies have advanced considerably since Eliade's contention that the meaning of a religious phenomenon could be understood only if it was studied in isolation as something religious. Eliade insisted that 'to try and grasp the essence of such a phenomenon by means of physiology, psychology, sociology, economics, linguistics, art or any other study is false; it misses the one unique and irreducible element in it - the element of the sacred'.⁶⁶ However he is guilty of a methodological fallacy which D'Aquili termed arbitrary exclusion. This is when a study is so stringently focussed that it excludes through either 'ignorance or adherence to a normative rule from the consideration of material efficiently present in the phenomenon being studied'⁶⁷

Both James' and Eliades' classic works have served their purpose in outstanding fieldwork and comprehensive phenomenology.⁶⁸ From speculation and philosophy we have reached a pinnacle of biological reductionism in the study of behaviour occasioned by beliefs. This is the reason that our study includes evaluation of homologous rituals to the *Ratib*, consisting of a constellation of the *Ta'ziyyah*, the Whirling Derwishes of Konya, and the *Zurkhaneh* ritual of Iran which are dramatic rituals presented as theatre, which assist in unravelling the semiotic features of the *Ratib* and without which, neither the most dedicated devotees (*murid*) nor accomplished and proficient guides (*murshid*, *khalifa*) could explicate. Neither of these groups was fully competent in either one of linguistic, historical or mystical fields.⁶⁹ This is due to the prolonged isolation of the Muslims from the mainland of Islam. An

⁶⁵ Martin, *Approaches*, 60. But there are cosmogonic myths as we discuss later.

⁶⁶ Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1959), xi.

⁶⁷ D'Aquili et al., *Spectrum*, 345.

⁶⁸ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London: Penguin, [1902] 1985).

⁶⁹We differentiate between homologous and analogous according to D'Aquili. Homologous is when the neural structure is similar between species and analogous describes a ritual in differing species.

example of this is reflected in the symbolism and function of the instrument cabinet used in the *Ratib* commonly known as '*die bank*' in South Africa. Desai stated that it is one of the elements in the *Ratib* on which there was scanty information. In Iran during the *Zurkhaneh* ritual, an informant stated that it was a '*darwish*', which refers to an ascetic or saint. Upon questioning a more knowledgeable student the astonishing answer was that '*die bank*' referred to a door (*darwazeh*) to enlightenment, since the 'cabinet' consisted of two pillars over which was strung the inscribed lintel constituting a portal through which the devotee entered an alternate dimension. This was later elaborated further by another imam. *Dar* connotes the sill of a door in both Arabic and Persian.⁷⁰ It is of great salience when interpretation of the mystical aspects of the *Ratib* is attempted.⁷¹

We extend our scope to the *Hamadsha* and *Zar* possession states, as well as discourse on a possession state amongst the African, the *Amafufuyana* syndrome, which enables us to postulate a unified theory on the neurophysiology of these phenomena. Many of the disciples do not understand the Arabic recital which is often interspersed with Malay or Indian words, and are unaware of the historical dimensions of associated rituals. An example of this, besides the presence of '*die bank*', as discussed above, are the varied hues of flags, chains, and fire displays and the street processions in the *Ratib* which are prominent elements in the correlated rituals. Without a study of the whole ritual-complex, vital elements would have been incomprehensible, leading to speculation and erroneous ascriptions.

Our study on trance rituals, however, had to be multidisciplinary and intercultural. It embraces such diverse fields as Bushman rock art, psychology, neurobiology and immunology, besides the traditional systems of the three disparate groups under review and goes beyond 'mysticism', as Katz averred, 'whatever that

⁷⁰ This bears out al-Attas's view that neither can one use a dictionary to elicit meanings, nor could adepts have the correct knowledge about an instrument or religious phenomenon or ritual action without tracing it to its source, the Qur'an and the Prophet. S. H. Naquib al-Attas, *Islam, Secularism and Philosophy of the Future* (London: Mansell Press, 1985), 198.

⁷¹ The portal is a doorway to enlightenment. In an altered state of consciousness, perception is interfered with, such as the absence of pain during the *Ratib*, as well as during fire-walking and fire handling as in Khoisan and the Hindu rituals. It is of significance also in the explanation of non-Muslim participants in the *Ratib* who do not have belief, initiation or proper preparation.

might be!' Confining the focus on description, interpretation and explication of a single ritual phenomenon would not enable us to obtain a holistic perspective or achieve any measure of comprehension. A cross-cultural scope, is not confined to the philosophy, and neither to the phenomenology, but to elucidation, which has to overarch varied fields such as social anthropology and comprising beliefs, myth, doctrine, ritual, mysticism, 'symbolic drama' and neurobiology. The performance of a particular form of trance ritual presented as theatre requires an interpretation as well as explanation, and following Lawson and McCauley, these have to be interactive.⁷² At the risk of being accused of reductionism, we advance beyond description and interpretation, to the disciplines of psychology and immunology to elucidate trance ritual. In this mixture of 'n/um magic', spirit possession, and 'sacred presence', ascribed to such diverse fields as shamanism, mysticism, asceticism, 'popular religion', 'folk religion' and the established theistic scriptural traditions, we attempt the elucidation of universal features in trance ritual and propose a unified neurobiological explication of these bizarre behaviours. We discuss the nexus between religion, ritual and trance in Chapter Two.

R. C. Zaehner was categorical that much of 'mysticism starts from the unproven premise that it is a more or less uniform phenomenon appearing in all the great religions.'⁷³ In his earlier works, Steven Katz also insisted that there is no 'common core' to the 'pluralistic position' which emerged in the conference on mysticism.⁷⁴ However, in his latest compendium Ninian Smart suggests that 'there are genuine phenomenological comparisons to be made cross-culturally, especially in relation to mystical experience'.⁷⁵ We discourse on comparative trance rituals in the Khoisan and the Hindu in Chapter three, to reveal that there are common features in

⁷²E. Thomas Lawson & Robert N. McCauley, *Rethinking Religion* (Cambridge: C.U.P, 1990), 14.

⁷³ R.C. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (Oxford: One World, [1960] 1990), iii. Zaehner has based his work on a study of Yazid al Bistami as a representative of sufism, who but represents a minority school having vedantic influences concerning 'self-deism'.

⁷⁴ Steven T. Katz, ed. *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (London:Sheldon Press, 1978), 8.

⁷⁵Ninian Smart, 'What would Buddhaghosa have made of the *The Cloud of Unknowing*?' in Steven Katz, ed. *Mysticism and Language* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1992), 103ff.

both the *Ratib* and the Kavadi, but the interpretations are vastly diverse. The role of the 'shamans' in healing occurs in all three traditions, but that of the imams is grounded on a revelatory basis of the Qur'an and Muhammad. Based on that of the biogenetic school of D'Aquili et al., our perspective reveals a homogeneity amongst the disparate traditions, and a convergence when 'trance' is considered as an epiphenomenon of a neurobiological process.⁷⁶ Ludwig amongst others regards trance as a neurobiological process.⁷⁷ Neurobiological processes, we argue, are the common core to mystical experience, asceticism, possession and indeed the underlying process for the efficacy of all ritual which the biogenetic structuralist school proclaims is adaptive.

Specific Methodology

To explore the *Ratib* as an expression of religion, we favour the multidisciplinary paradigm of the biogenetic school. For the study of a related ritual, the *Ta'ziyyah*, Schubel utilised Geertz's definition of religion.⁷⁸ Despite his protestations that his article was not aimed to be a refutation of Geertz's standpoint, Talal Asad, scion of the famed Muhammad Asad, a translator of the Qur'an, has incisively differed from Geertz.⁷⁹ We thus prefer Victor Turner's paradigm of the transformation of ritual into 'social drama', and his analysis of the nexus between 'performance', 'entertainment', and ritual since his penultimate work *From Ritual to Theatre* is based on a journey 'from traditional anthropological studies of ritual performance to a lively interest in modern theatre, and particularly experimental theatre'.⁸⁰ Whilst his thespian heritage certainly influenced his perspective in regarding

⁷⁶E.G. D'Aquili, C.D. Laughlin, and J. McManus, eds *The Spectrum of Ritual - A Biogenetic Structural Analysis* (New York:Columbia University Press, 1979).

⁷⁷Arnold Ludwig, 'Altered States of Consciousness' in *Altered States of Consciousness*, ed. Charles T. Tart. (New York: John Wiley, 1969),22.

⁷⁸Vernon James Schubel, *Religious Performance in Contemporary Islam: Shi'a Devotional Rituals in South East Asia* (Carolina: Univ. South Carolina Press, 1993)

⁷⁹Talal Asad, 'Anthropological Conceptions of Religion:Reflections on Geertz.' in *Man* N.S. 18, (1983), 237-59.

⁸⁰This was the last book that was published a year before his death in December 1983. His final contribution was the posthumous joint edition. Victor Turner and Edward M. Bruner, eds. *The Anthropology of Experience* (Urbana:University Illinois Press, 1986).

human behaviour as 'social drama', his elaborations of van Gennep on *rites de passage* and his distinction between 'liminal' and 'liminoid', the latter being performance and the former being closer to experimental theatre, provides a link with altered states of consciousness as shown in the 'experimental' theatre of Richard Schechner.⁸¹ We show the *Ratib* to be beyond theatre or performance.⁸² We submit the *Ratib* to a study of performance amongst several groups, and analyse the performative elements in Chapter Four. Compared to Schubel's 'grass-roots up' approach, ours is 'top-down'.⁸³ He studied the ritual and then elicited the explanations. In ours, we elicit a foundation of the anthropological aspects of Islam and of Islamic ritual, before studying the *Ratib*, which yields more valid results. Such attention to people and their belief leads to a clearer understanding of their rituals, or their art as Lewis Williams has elicited in his epochal studies on Bushman rock art.⁸⁴

Laughlin, McNamus, and D'Aquili's paradigm of biogenetic structuralism invokes two general and complementary research strategies in its study of human social phenomena: a neuroanthropological study, which is the study of the relationship between the brain and sociocultural behaviour, and a comparative ethological study, which is the study of behaviour in a panspecific and biological context, under which they propose the following model:⁸⁵

Isolation of the Phenomenon

We have selected the *Ratib* as the principal ritual for analysis, dealing with its historical and legendary origins, its precursor *anlagen* or correlated rituals, and its expression of Islam under siege as a core ritual which sustained the beleaguered

⁸¹Richard Schechner, 'Magnitudes of Performance' in Victor Turner & Edward Bruner. eds. *The Anthropology of Experience* (Urbana. University of Illinois, 1986), 364-365. An altered state of consciousness was produced during the 'experimental theatre' production of Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*.

⁸²Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York. PAJ, Publications ([1982] 1992), 106ff.

⁸³Schubel, *Ritual and Drama*, v.

⁸⁴David Lewis-Williams and Thomas Dowson, *Images of Power* (Johannesburg: Southern Books, 1989).

⁸⁵D'Aquili et al., *Spectrum*, 19.

Muslim community for more than a century.

Operational Definition of the Ritual

The *Ratib* is part of a ritual complex of Muslim piety and differs markedly from its correlated rituals in being a trance ritual which is performed as theatre. The other *Rawatib* are either public or private rituals (household) which have no marked distinction between audience and devotee.⁸⁶ For purposes of comparison, we review three sets of ritual, from inconsonant cultures. Two of the rituals are phenomenologically markedly identical, but differing in their verbal aspects and diverse interpretations. They are from disparate cultures of Islam and Hinduism in South Africa respectively. We survey the trance dances of pre-literate culture of the Khoisan, which represents a remarkable situation. This obviates the condition set by Barbara Lex, that systematic investigations of trance behaviour be conducted in geographically distant populations to eliminate 'particular driving techniques based on genetically based autonomic factors'.⁸⁷

Establishment of the Universality of the Phenomenon

Trance is a human universal, according to Goodman and Bourguignon, whilst Lex states that it is pervasive to all sentient organisms capable of conceptualisation, eg. amongst chimpanzees.⁸⁸ In addition we widen our focus to cover possession states, as we elicit the link between ritual and asceticism, trances, possession states, and resolution of stress. The establishment of an operational environment, eg purification

⁸⁶In the *Ratib*, there is a marked boundary between participant and audience. In no circumstances could non-initiates join the performance. In the whirling derwishes, the boundary is fluid, as members of the audience can join or leave, (as Stanley Lane Poole did in his description of a *badra*). In the *Ta'ziyyah*, there is no separation between audience and the participants. But in the stage play, the performers and audience are controlled.

⁸⁷ Barbara Lex, 'The Neurobiology of Trance Ritual' in D'Aquili et al., eds. *The Spectrum of Ritual* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 145. A similar conclusion was reached by Desmond Desai, *Thesis*, 485. He suggested that Trance rituals in South Africa need further investigation.

⁸⁸ Barbara Lex, *Spectrum*, 36. Whilst both man and the chimpanzees have 99% identical genes, it is the 1% which is responsible for a larger brain in man, and the ability of speech. Being thus homo religiosus enables man to create symbols, to accomplish altered states of consciousness by voluntary use of rituals. J.S. Kruger makes a similar comment of humans and chimpanzees sharing 99% of genes but it is not the ability of *homo habilis* for creating rituals and speech. J. S. Kruger, *Along Edges*, 190, 152.

by fasting or ritual lustrations and sacrificial or propitiatory preconditions occur in all three traditions.⁸⁹

Establishment of the Neurognostic basis

Ideally, this should include all the subsystems operating in concert within the human nervous system mediating the trance. Our hypothesis which views trance as an epiphenomenon of a deeper underlying intraneural and haematologically complex process, is based on data from the composite discipline of psycho-neuro-immunology.

Following Blelock's postulate that the Immune system is a sensory organ, and also from the serendipitous finding that the Immune System of the body can be conditioned by Pavlovian techniques, we propose that certain sensory stimuli cause the secretion of Endogenous opioid peptides (EOPs). These peptides have an effect on consciousness, which results in a Trance.⁹⁰

A preferred term for 'trance' is an altered state of consciousness, despite the former being popular amongst earlier workers, and occurring frequently in academic literature. One of the imams was adamant that the *Ratib* is not a trance state, since he is fully conscious at all times.⁹¹ He is correct in that the adepts do not lose consciousness, due to 'conditioning', but an altered state of consciousness has certainly been occasioned. D'Aquili and associates term this process an 'entrainment'. The fact that eastern mysticisms operate at a polyphasic level of consciousness is well recognised.⁹² That 'entrainment', a neologism used by D'Aquili et. al., for Pavlovian conditioning enables one to reach the final state of consciousness, without proceeding 'up the rungs of a ladder' has been observed and its lack in western

⁸⁹ Smith, J.E, 'William James's Account of Mysticism: A Critical Appraisal' in *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*. ed. S. T. Katz, 254. He cites four modes of preparation: Rational dialectic, Discipline of the Body, Purificatory, Moral (*Niyah*) and Sacrificial or Propitiatory.

⁹⁰ R. Ader and S.Cohen, eds. *Psychoneuroimmunology* (New York:Academic Press, 1981).

⁹¹ Imam Gafieldien Abrahams of Bosmont. See below under chapter five: Analysis of the *Ratib*. One of his disciples, a medical practitioner, Dr. Ahmed Nana of Bosmont also stated that he did not lose consciousness when being pierced by the skewers.

⁹² Laughlin, C.D., John McManus, Eugene D'Aquili, *Brain Symbol and Experience* (Boston: Shambala Books, 1990), 226. See also Gary Zukav, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* (London: Fontana, 1979), 331, 102, 56.

philosophy has been lamented by several authorities in both the physical sciences, as spelling 'the end of science.'⁹³ In religious studies, Celia Kourie asserts 'that the revival of studies in mysticism are indicative of a refusal to accept what can be seen and measured as indicative of reality'.⁹⁴ Different terms are employed in various studies on consciousness, notably by Laughlin et al, who favour the term 'void consciousness', a term used in the Buddhist tradition, to denote the pinnacle of an altered state.⁹⁵

Comparative Neurophysiology of the phenomenon

Our study compares trance rituals amongst the pre-literate Khoisan, and the Muslims who constitute the youngest of the Abrahamic triad of religions, and the dyad of Hindu rituals of Kavadi (spear piercing), and the Draupadi (fire-walking rite). The diverse interpretations amongst the disparate traditions to similar phenomenology points to a biological isomorphism. This was the dominant factor which accounts for an approach following the biogenetic structuralist school. We discourse on these in Chapter three.

In Chapter four we investigate the mystical aspects on the *Ratib* and in chapter five we analyse the sacramental elements of the *Ratib*, relating it to performance and asceticism, with its socially adaptive, and therapeutic facets which leads into the role of the imam as a religious functionary, healer, and exorcist of possession states. Following some cases of possession treated by us in relation to Felicity Edwards' definitive study on the *Amafufuyana syndrome* occurring in South Africa, we propose an alternate therapy for these 'states'. An antagonistic injection to the engendering neurophysiology should yield instantaneous results. This therapy is based on a specific neurochemical cause, rather than by sedation with tranquillisers, or healing by

⁹³Gary Zukav. *The Dancing Wu Li Masters. An Overview of the New Physics*. (London: Fontana. 1979): 331. 'The 'end of science' means the coming of Western civilisation in its own time and in its own way, into the higher dimensions of human experience'.

⁹⁴Celia Kourie, 'Mysticism: A Survey of Recent Issues.' in *Journal for the Study of Religion*. 5:2, (Sept. 1992), 83-103.

⁹⁵These terms are tradition specific. The Khoisan use the term *kia*, while amongst the Muslims it is a *hal*. *Kundalini* is the Buddhist term. Laughlin C.D. et al., eds. *Brain Symbol and Experience*. (Boston: Shambhala. 1990), 331. Maslow, a renowned psychologist, called it a 'peak experience'.

traditional exorcisms which result in equivocal outcomes in a transitional society such as South Africa.⁹⁶

Unified Model of the hypothesis

The final step is the unification of all the data derived from 'anthropological observations' into a coherent explanation of the phenomenon in man. 'Ideally the explanation should account for the neurophysiological processes mediating the phenomenon.' 'The explanation should ideally be capable of predicting (or retrodicting) the occurrence of the phenomenon with a probability greater than that of competing explications'.⁹⁷ It should be a 'testable hypothesis'. Our explication which postulates an alternative theory for trance rituals does accord with the above postulates as argued in Chapter 6.

Laughlin and his co-workers caution about a 'common failing in anthropological literature', when a 'cause' is attributed to a specific function resulting in 'a *post hoc* fallacy'. This is particularly evident in the explication of trance ritual by the theory advanced by Gelhorn and his co-workers on the 'tuning of the autonomic nervous system' which Barbara Lex stated is speculative.⁹⁸ Whilst the autonomic nervous system does play a *part* in trance states, it is not the sole cause of the trance, nor entirely satisfactory as an explanation for trances. We tender a more contemporaneous and holistic mechanism for the explanation of the trance.⁹⁹

Problems in Research

Trance rituals are complex phenomena, particularly in cross cultural multi disciplinary approaches recommended by the biogenetic structuralist school. Many of the imams refused to divulge information, as endured by the previous researchers,

⁹⁶The posthumous magisterial work on 'madness' in medieval Islamic society reveals that there were sophisticated methods for treatment, because religion pervaded the entire environment, from the hospital, to therapy, to social care for the family of a deranged person. Michael W. Dols, *Majnun: The Madman in Medieval Islamic Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

⁹⁷ D'Aquili et al., *Spectrum*, 25. By measuring endorphine levels, pre- and post-performance, it is possible to elicit the biochemical effects of ritual.

⁹⁸ Barbara W. Lex, 'Neurobiology of Ritual Trance' in D'Aquili et al., 118.

⁹⁹ By utilising the discipline of Psychoneuroimmunology.

Robin Chambers, Desmond Desai and lately Sandy Willcox of Johannesburg. Professor Thillavel Naidoo encountered a similar problem whilst enquiring about the Kavadi.¹⁰⁰ Interviews are often misleading in view of the lack of linguistic or religious competence. Sandy Willcox found an imam not to be articulate enough. She ascribed this to reticence. The problem could also be attributed to the fact that the experience is 'ineffable'.¹⁰¹ The phenomenological aspects have been adequately covered by previous researchers, albeit as outsiders. I had considerable difficulty in eliciting information because of the inherent suspicion, and it was only when one of the leading 'masters' in Cape Town recognised me as having performed the pilgrimage in 1966 in the same group as his, and that I had treated him medically in Makkah, that *entre* was obtained and the disciples were requested to grant me their fullest cooperation. Similarly, Desai was welcomed only after he became a patron of one of the *Ratib* groups (*jamah*). Being a researcher from the same tradition was invaluable in evaluating the information supplied. To have won the confidence of an imam assures acceptance by the group and leads to a sharing of 'secret' matters. I visited several initiates at their homes, and some of them came to visit at my daughter's flat in Cape Town.

Sources and Materials

Although there is a wealth of legendary material available on *Sufism* in both English, and other western languages, as well as Islamic languages, there is seldom mention of the *Rifa'iyyah*. There was considerable difficulty in obtaining any literature on the Order from local sources or from overseas. Desai and Willcox experienced similar problems. Information derived from oral sources is subject to variation and is largely unsubstantiated. The details in the various Encyclopaedia are superficial, probably due to the fact that the ritual is on the fringes of mystical life, and regarded as spurious even by scholars such as Annemarie Schimmel, who remarked 'that strange

¹⁰⁰Thillavel Naidoo. Dept of Hindu Studies. University Durban-Westville. Personal communication. 12 January 95.

¹⁰¹Steven Katz maintains that 'trapped by the unclosable abyss between experience and utterance, the adept uses a language he or she knows to be necessarily inferior, hopelessly inadequate to the descriptive task at hand.' from 'Mystical Speech and Mystical Meaning' in. *Language and Mysticism* ed. Steven Katz, (London:O.U.P., 1992), 3.

birds' had come to nest in the tree of Islam.¹⁰²

Despite the fact that translations of hagiological works are avidly sought in the West, legends and literature pertaining to saints, their miracles and works are regarded as heretical by the authorities in the majority of Muslim countries. The writings on *Tasawwuf* are banned from importation or sale. This is especially evident in Saudi Arabia where the regnant school of theology, the puritanical *Wahabi* sect, regards *Sufism*, the mystical aspects of Islam, as polytheistic.¹⁰³ Referring to the saints and their practises, Fazlur Rahman surprisingly, also reflects the derogatory view on *Sufism*: 'It is this phenomenon - the total effect of superstition, miracle mongering, tomb worship, mass hysteria and of course charlatanism... as moral and spiritual debris from which Muslim society has to be reclaimed for Islam'.¹⁰⁴ He was oblivious to the differences between *Sufism* of the market-place and *tasawwuf* of the Qur'an.¹⁰⁵

Nasr ascribes the opposition by the theologians to the 'mystics' as a 'superficial' approach typical of the *qishri 'ulama*, despite one of the four principle Imams having pronounced that Shari'ah is incomplete without *Tasawwuf*.¹⁰⁶ *Tasawwuf* is a preferred term, which distinguishes from the popular cultic forms of mysticism termed *Sufism*. Its rituals range from the active or dramatic to the 'sober' or contemplative

¹⁰² Annemarie Schimmel, 'Aspects of Mystical thought in Islam'. in Yvonne Yazbeck et al., *The Islamic Impact*. (New York: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1984),113

¹⁰³ Ahmed Mukaddam, *Common Practices*, 11ff. An article in the MUSLIM NEWS (6-5-1983) describes a protest organised by the Cape Town Branch of the Sunni Razvi Society addressed to the Saudi Arabian Government's Fatwa (legal) Committee protesting the banning and burning of the Urdu translation of the Qur'an by Maulana Ahmed Raza Khan of Bareilly in India, because it was from the perspective of *tasawwuf*.

¹⁰⁴ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*. (Chicago: Chicago U.Press, 1974), 246. See also Frederick M. Denny, *Islam* (San Francisco. Harper, 1987), 92 who states that 'since the stern puritanical reforms of the Wahabi movement...more than two hundred years ago, saint veneration has been outlawed...'

¹⁰⁵ What is probably meant is 'pirism' which enslaves devotees to the Guide which could entail exploitation. Annemarie Schimmel in Yvonne Haddad et al., *Impact*, 131. Mir Valiuddin has proven the Qur'anic roots of *Sufism*. Mir Valliuddin, *Qur'anic Sufism* (New Delhi: Bansaridas, 1959).

¹⁰⁶ When *Imam* is capitalised it refers to scholars and Divines, whilst *imam* would refer to a religious functionary, as at the Cape. One of the earliest works by al-Hujwiri, cited by R.A. Nicholson states: 'Sufism was in existence during the Prophet's time, but did not have a name. Now it has a name, but no longer exists.'

form as distinguished by Imam Malik: i.e. an exoteric Islam needs an esoteric dimension *tasawwuf* to fully comply with the deontology of Islam.¹⁰⁷ A integral balance has to be maintained between the exoteric or legalistic aspect of Islam and the esoteric or spiritual. Although Egypt and Syria have considerable *zawiya* (monasteries) belonging to the *Rifa'iyya* it was not possible to obtain any literature from those countries either. Thus considerable deformation about the mystical aspects of Islam is occurring in contemporary times. The imams in South Africa are validation of this deformation, since the names of the ritual itself, as well as the nomenclature of the instruments have been corrupted, and the purpose of the ritual and the choreography eg. '*die bank*' has remained enigmatical, or reified. Many have dismissed the ritual as 'entertainment' at best and heretical at worst. Recent academic studies, particularly that of Desai are a welcome relief in reflecting an advance in firstly viewing the *Ratib* as an Islamic artform, and secondly as belonging to a mystical order.

We obtained some material from Saudi Arabia through a resident of Medina, Fakhruddin Ahmed Owaisi who provided videotapes of clandestine performances of the Rawatib and other mystical rituals performed there and also assisted us in resolving difficulties in translation of mystical literature. A video on the *Ratib* as performed in Bagdad, shows a postulant attached to two live 250 volt mains 'wires' not being affected at all. When a fluorescent bulb was strung across his arms, it burst into light. He also chewed and swallowed glass fragments from a fluorescent bulb. He seemed oblivious of the danger of fatal fluoride and mercurial poisoning.¹⁰⁸ Annemarie Schimmel describes members of the sodality eating snakes, scorpions and glass.¹⁰⁹

Video material was obtained of five performances, one in Mafeking, two in Johannesburg, and two in Cape Town under the direction of Shaikh Logday of

¹⁰⁷ S.H. Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1975), 125. There are problems in the use of the terms 'exoteric and esoteric' which will be discussed later. By deontology, we follow Graham who uses the term as 'a duty' *deon* for the obligatory *faraid* rites of Islam. The translation has legalistic implications, whereas the word signifies a 'necessity' or essential requirement for spiritual progress.

¹⁰⁸ Video: *Mazare Awliya*: (Shrines of the Friends of God in Bagdad). (The *Ratib al Rifa'iyyah* in Bagdad). Islamic Tapes. 56 Cathedral Road. Durban. 1995.

¹⁰⁹ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. (Chapel Hill: University North Carolina Press, 1975), 209.

Athlone. Personal attendances were made of two performances held in Johannesburg and several in Cape Town. Textual materials were obtained from the leader of a group of South Africans led by a traditional healer, Mohamed Malek of Lenasia who performed *ziyarah* (pilgrimage) to Bagdad to the shrine of the founder of the *Rifa'iyyah* in Iraq and even 'at the source', could not find sufficient literature. However, after some difficulty, a local youth provided one of the two Arabic sources we have utilised in our study - *as-Sayyid Ahmad ar-Rifa'i* by Yunus al-Sheikh Ibrahim as-Samara'iy, published in Bagdad by the New Eastern Library Press. There is no publication date. It is biographical and lists the works of the founder as well and includes the *Qasidah Rifa'iyyah* which is recited with the *dhikr* of the performance. The other is the more accessible *Hadiqat al-'auliya*, (The Garden of the Saints) published in Beirut which has but a few pages on the founder of the *Rifa'iyyah*. Western encyclopaedias such as *Hastings* and the recent *Encyclopaedia of Religion* edited by Eliade have rather succinct entries. The article by D.S. Margoliouth in the *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam* devotes three columns to the order of the *Rifa'iyyah*.¹¹⁰ Wherever possible, we have utilised contemporary publications, preferring those produced by local academics, which are readily available and more current than oversea texts.

In both the *Ratib* and the *Kavadi* ceremonies, informants were reluctant to talk to non-initiates or persons they regarded as 'outsiders' concerning details of their performance, beliefs. There are two reasons for this in the case of the *Ratib*. Firstly, the primary source of their beliefs are derived from the Qur'an, which is sacred text and Allah himself has admonished that it cannot be handled by the ritually impure.¹¹¹ The sacred source of their beliefs is to be treated with due reverence, 'touched only by those in a state of ritual purity' and not subjected to frivolous questioning by the

¹¹⁰ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 475-477.

¹¹¹ The Qur'an in *Surah al-Waqi'ah* 56:79 states: 'None shall touch it except the purified.' A Saudi translator, al-Hilali claims 'purified' refers to 'angels rather than 'ritual purity'. In *Surah al-Muzzammil*, (73:5) the verse 'Verily We shall send down to you a weighty word', is translated by Hilali as 'obligations, legal laws,' which is clear evidence of deformation of the Qur'anic ethos since 'weighty' refers to the Qur'an whose revelation the Prophet found onerous, rather than to legal proscriptions.

uninitiated or the ignorant.¹¹² Secondly, it is the prerogative of the 'guide or master' who alone is responsible for revealing details or secrets. The belief that the sacred words possessed 'power' and could harm the non-initiated persons is prevalent amongst the devotees. By belonging to an order, the disciple is 'protected' by the preceptor.¹¹³ The knowledge that the disciples 'attained' could not be simply available irrespective of intention, purpose and capacity' of any enquirer. A saying of Imam Ali is explicit: 'Speak to the people according to their understanding'. The purpose of which was the prevention of fallacies from being propagated. Harm could ensue to the individual as well as the *ummah* (people) due to the inherent power of the sacred word. A covert reason may be the fact that the *Ratib* did not enjoy the approval of the scholastics who were opposed to the performance of the ritual and who considered it an innovation (*bid'ah*). Thus, inadequate and improper information could serve as grist for the mill for the opponents of the ritual.

Validity of personal participation

Geertz believed that before one could define Islam, one had to observe and then draw conclusions.¹¹⁴ His studies based on 'folk' Islam were criticised by William Graham as well as Talal Asad. The difficulty of this 'bottom-up' approach is that one would be observing a 'small segment' of a greater whole, which could be misleading as there is tremendous flexibility in the expressions of Islamic ritual. This is especially evident in the *Ratib* ritual, where the verbal elements differ in the same town on different occasions, and even when the same sheikh reads different compositions at different times. Similar experiences have been confirmed by Desmond Desai. This leads to inaccurate, varied and conflicting reports, and simultaneously renders analysis difficult. Being a Muslim, I was long perturbed at the perfunctory descriptions and evaluations of the *Ratib* ritual as being animistic, (Geertz) a Hindu ritual (Achmat



¹¹² S. M. Naquib al-Attas, *Islam, Secularism and the Philosophy of the Future* (London: Mansell, 1985), 100.

¹¹³ Imam Abrahams 'I protect them, just as my father and grandfather have protected me.' SABC. 3 broadcast on 22-03-1997.

¹¹⁴ Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed* (New Haven. Conn. Yale University Press, 1968). He found wide variation because he studied Islam in two geographically separated countries, and culturally distinct societies, Morocco and Java.

Davids), or 'not part of Islam' (Roubaix Commission). One Imam stated that 'it brought disgrace to Islam'. It was evident that these misconceptions were due to the fact that the verbal aspects, the recital from what Graham called 'essentialist texts', the Qur'an, the *Hadith* and *Awrad* (Dhikr manuals) were not taken into consideration, nor were the mystical roots ever elicited, to reveal that the *Ratib* was an *elite* expression of Islam, reserved for a few.

The advantage of being a participant and having a sound theoretical basis of Tassawuf over many years proved invaluable. As Kruger remarked, 'the more we know beforehand the more we (shall) see' enabled me to better evaluate and interpret the phenomenology, the symbols and the gestures.¹¹⁵ I could also in a certain measure be eclectic when replies or explanations given did not accord with what I could verify in the literature. A Wachian approach was applied, as William Cantwell Smith so repeatedly emphasised, that the 'cardinal methodological problem in religious studies is whether or not one had to 'participate in another's religion before one could claim to understand it'.¹¹⁶ This problem is greatly compounded when a study spans across disparate cultures as ours does, where the experience is ineffable, and the informants, coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, often lack linguistic competence.¹¹⁷

There is also a *caveat* to the aspect of personal participation in trance rituals: the probability of invalid interpretations of phenomena during periods of the observer experiencing the initial stages of 'liminality' manifested by a sensation of lightheadedness and feeling of floating upwards, similar to an out of body experience. This could be due to the hot, excited and overcrowded atmosphere which prevails during the ceremony. Desai concurs, and Stanley Lane-Poole underwent a similar

¹¹⁵J.S. Kruger, *Along Edges: Religion in South Africa-Bushman, Christian and Buddhist* (Pretoria: Unisa, 1995), 81.

¹¹⁶W.C. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York: Mentor, 1964), 202.

¹¹⁷Many of the Imams, writers and laity, by saying that the *Ratib* is not part of Islam, actually mean that it is not one of the 'obligatory' rituals, the *fara'id*. Desai quotes one Imam as saying that 'it is no sin if one does not participate in the ritual'.

experience.¹¹⁸ It was resisted by focussing on the action rather than concentrating upon on the drumming or the sounds of the chanting, following the orthogonal advice of an Imam, that to achieve a 'state'(*hal, tariqat*), one had to concentrate on the recital and drumming and shut out everything else.

The problem of Objectivity

The problem of gathering data, expressed as objective fact depends on 'constructs' which cause meanings to change. A report in history existing without a referent or context, has no value. Desai quotes Pedlar's warning of accepting as true what is observed.¹¹⁹ Analytical constructs are 'tools we employ to make sense of facts' and in the study of religious ritual, explanation and interpretation produce a different meaning than mere historiographies. Since constructs are subjective ideas, it impedes objectivity.¹²⁰

As Martin suggested there is a choice between 'fideistic subjectivism or scientific objectivism'.¹²¹ We claim that an inclusive approach is possible. The observer can remain objective regarding the study of phenomena, and yet maintain his beliefs regarding the transcendent, which in any case is beyond empirical investigation.

Lawson and McCauley state that 'no datum is self explanatory' and that 'theories guide interpretation...all sorts of pre-theoretic intuitions and common sense inform much of ethnography.'¹²² J. S. Kruger concurs by the comment that 'when it comes to religious studies, objectivity should not be the ideal, which is unattainable.' This would lead to the conclusion that 'it is indeed a far cry from the myth of science

¹¹⁸Stanley Lane-Poole, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* Vol 2:201-3. Cited by A.J. Arberry, *Sufism*. (London: O.U.Press, 1950), 91. He said 'but I worked myself into an uncomfortable heat.'

¹¹⁹ Desai, *Thesis*, 467. This is analogous to looking towards the sky during the day and proclaiming that there are no stars. It would be a fact, but untrue, since when conditions of observation change at night, a different picture emerges. A fact therefore needs qualification.

¹²⁰Auwais Kajee, 'Empirical and Analytical Tensions in Methodology'. UCT. Cape Town. Unpublished paper. 21-5-95.

¹²¹Richard C. Martin, 'Islam and Religious Studies' in *Approaches to the Study of Islam* in Religious Studies ed. R.C. Martin (Arizona: Univ. Ariz Press, 1985), 2.

¹²²Lawson and McCauley, *Rethinking*, 90.

as the work of a disembodied, unfeeling, intellect.'¹²³ Annemarie Schimmel thinks it unlikely that there could ever be a completely objective study of religion 'considering something that lies outside purely scientific' research.¹²⁴

The phenomenology of mysticism in Islam must lead to the central point, *Deus absconditus*, according to Heiler's model of concentric spheres, which makes provision for ritual acts. Experiences such as revelation, intuition, instinct, dreams, ecstasy, sacred man, are confined within the sphere of the *Deus revelatus*, the God who has his face towards man, as absolute holiness, truth, justice, love, mercy and salvation. No study of Islam can be comprehended without such a model, of which there are others.¹²⁵ We find that Heiler's model has been patterned along similar lines to that of Abul Huseyn an-Nuri (907)), a mystic of Bagdad and also by his contemporary al-Hakim at Tirmidhi. None of the latter's primary works were available.¹²⁶ Since they are based on Qur'anic sources we draw upon the model following Annemarie Schimmel to explicate Muslim cosmology.

Kritzchek and Lewis observed that 'Islam in Africa wears many faces'.¹²⁷ We could apply this aphorism to the *Ratib*, as Muslims themselves could not initially discern its mystic mask since the ritual displays considerable flexibility in both the verbal compositions, the physical enactments, and the choreography, as evident in the proscenium, the stage settings during mystical rituals. This is also delineated by Michael Gilsenan in his descriptions of the 'spatial representation' of the *hadra* rituals

¹²³Lawson and McCauley, *Rethinking*, 81.

¹²⁴Annemarie Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God: A phenomenological Approach to God*. (Albany: SUNY, 1994), xi.

¹²⁵ Seyyid Hoosein Nasr, compares the formal, legalistic (*Shari'ah*) aspects as constituting the rim of a circle, with the centre representing the *Deus Absconditus* or Reality, whilst the radii represent the different paths to the centre. These are termed *tariqa*, (Ar. pl. *Turuq* (paths) to the centre. The *Deus revelatus* represents the 'signs' *ayat* visible to man, such as the Qur'an which is the supreme symbol of the divinity in scriptural form. This accounts for the veneration of the Qur'an by Muslims. This is called the *Shadhili* Circle which relates the Law to the Love. The circumference of the *shari'ah* protects the inner *tariqa*. S.H. Nasr, *Ideals*, 122.

¹²⁶ Nasr, *Ideals*, xii.

¹²⁷J. Kritzchek and W.H. Lewis, *Islam in Africa*. (New York: von Nostrand, 1969), 6.

of various orders.¹²⁸ Our study of the *Ratib* was facilitated by serving in a general medical practice for four decades, coupled with an abiding interest in the paranormal, particularly possession states.¹²⁹ One could not have plumbed the mysteries of the ritual if we did not have prior theoretical knowledge of the normative as well as the esoteric aspects of Islam, *Tasawwuf*.¹³⁰ Medically one had to distinguish between the normal and the pathological.

A providential observation of the *Zurkhaneh* in Iran, as well as the *Ta'ziyyah* ceremonies, facilitated the construction of a conspectus of related rituals in the Islamic tradition. The particular explanations offered in various countries enabled the achievement of a more comprehensive classification of Islamic ritual than Graham, and a more holistic perspective on the *Ratib* compared to previous studies.¹³¹

The problem of Reductionism

The phenomenon of trance rituals is universal, cross-cultural and invariant. The Kavadi, a Hindu ritual is almost identical in its phenomenology to the *Ratib*, despite a disparate tradition. Considering San trances which have much congruence to the former, but are from a pre-literate tradition and largely dependant on percussion and rhythm rather than textual (verbal) elements, we have to conclude that the answer lies in an approach consistent with that of the biogenetic structuralist school, coupled with a multi-disciplinary analysis, which we attempt by including in our discourse, the current discipline of psychoneuro-immunology: i.e. cognitive elements, (belief in the

¹²⁸ Michael Gilsenan, *Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt* (London: Oxford U.Press, 1973), 160,162. It is important to note a common error of nomenclature, where the ritual is termed the *dhikr*, as the author does, whereas it refers to the recital of sacred words. Various orders have differing recitals, the compositions of which are termed *Ratib*, (Ar. an arrangement of verses, pl. *rawatib*.) Gilsenan actually describes a *hadra*, implying the invocation of a heirophany, derived from the Arabic root *h-d-r* to be present.

¹²⁹ G.M. Karim, 'Possession by Jinn? Some Cases.' *Proceedings of the Annual Conference*, Islamic Medical Association. Durban.1993.

¹³⁰ According to the school of biogenetic structuralism, 'exoteric' refers to 'methods', theories, and results being available to all, whilst in the latter the knowledge would only be 'given' to the initiate. This would ideally be representative of the 'mystical aspects of a tradition'. C.D. Laughlin, J. McManus and Eugene d'Aquili, *Brain, Symbol and Experience* (Boston:Shambhala, 1990), 343.

¹³¹ William A. Graham, 'Islam in the Mirror of Ritual' in *Islam's Understanding of itself*. Hounnisian and S. Vryonis. eds., (Malibu:Undene Publications, 1983), 53-71.

transcendent) combined with a neuro-physiological basis and reduction to an immunological defence response of the body. Trance is a function of the stress response of the body, which is the processual element, thus reducing it to neurobiology.

The locus of our study thus became an analysis of the effect of ritual on the stimulation of the Immune system, following the interdisciplinary approach to the social sciences, in accord with the main thrust of the biogenetic structuralist school.¹³² The reductionist approach has been questioned by Lawson and McCauley who claim that 'important developments in philosophy, cognitive psychology, cognitive linguistics, and anthropology over the last two decades point to a promising path through the wilderness, which is semantics. The meanings of religious rituals are especially unclear, not only are religious rituals symbolic, but they seem to be actions without instrumental value.'¹³³

The biogenetic structuralist school demurs with these statements. When considered biologically, rituals do have immense instrumental value. Indeed their very purpose is for both physical and psychic homeostasis, as well as personal and societal *diaphasis*. This is confirmed by D'Aquili and his associates who prefer the term equilibration rather than equilibrium because the former is a process, whilst the latter term describes a static state. Lawson and McCauley following the semiotic school of ritual thus rely on the 'cracking of a code' which results in much philosophical 'debitage' of the past which we can bypass through the contemporary approach of the biogenetic structuralist school. Examples of this speculative 'debitage' can be seen in the 'attempts to locate and describe the essence of mysticism', the underlying failure of unity posed by variant experiences expressed by associated mystical languages, the difficulty of decoding semiotic words, and seeing words as words rather than as sited in a semantic field, resulting in a plethora of conjecture and obfuscation.¹³⁴

Sophisticated terminology such as found in the taxonomy of mysticism by

¹³² D'Aquili et al., *Spectrum*, 153.

¹³³ E. Thomas Lawson & Robert McCauley, *Re-thinking*, 137.

¹³⁴ Hans Penner, 'The Mystic Illusion.' in Steven Katz ed. *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, 91 .

Zaehner, shows evidence of erudite scholarship, which however did not adjust its focus with contemporary advances, especially that of the biogenetic structuralist school or in cognitive psychology or neurobiology. The philosophical and explanatory hallmark of past anthropology discounts and disparages the biogenetic aspects of human behaviour, of which Clifford Geertz is a prime exponent. This approach can no longer be considered as providing a realistic frame for either developing new theories concerning the subject or unravelling its mysteries. Robin Chambers' motivation for her Honours thesis on the *Ratib* was because of an aversion towards the 'drier' anthropological topics coupled with an interest in music and religious ritual, which made the *Ratib* a challenging study.¹³⁵

How our study is an advance

Previous studies on the *Ratib* concerned themselves with 'thick descriptions'. This was a defective phenomenology, since none of the researchers considered the salience of the verbal elements, the recitals. These were labelled as 'raucous singing' by outsiders and the liturgical significance was overlooked by Muslim observers as well. If an analysis of the verbal elements would have been made, rather than of the physical movements (gestures), it would have indicated much earlier, especially to some Muslim observers, that this was an Islamic ritual.¹³⁶ Both Robin Chambers and Desmond Desai have affirmed the Islamic basis and mystical origins of the ritual. The latter, being an ethnomusicologist has made a positive contribution to the study of the *Ratib*, by regarding the ritual as a Muslim artform, and eliciting the musical elements in the recitals ('*djiekers*'), as well as delineating the dance gestures.¹³⁷ He suggested that two parameters were still outstanding, the textual aspects of the *Ratib*, and a more refined medical investigation.

We consider our work to be an advance in that we have managed to obtain the texts and analysed the verbal compositions from three sources, one from Bagdad, a printed Arabic text from a biography of the founder of the mystical order, and a

¹³⁵Robin Chambers, *Thesis*, 2.

¹³⁶Achmat Davids and Maulana Ahmed Mukkadam.

¹³⁷Desmond Desai uses the colloquial form of the Arabic for *Dhikr*, iteration of the Sacred Name.

complete text from a Johannesburg Imam: a handwritten prayer manual, including the *dhikr* for haemostasis (stopping bleeding), and the recitals for sanctifying the instruments, flags, and the initiation ceremony of the adepts which have not been previously described. They reveal a diversity in the texts that are recited, their form, sequence and composition, despite the similarity of the performances. The initiation rite reveals the roots of the *Ratib* recitals to be thoroughly vested in the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, the practices of Muhammad (S.A.W). Previous works did not consider the socio-political aspects of the ritual. Because of this hiatus, the researchers failed to realise that the *Ratib* could be regarded as the first organised 'political protest' dissimulated as 'social drama', or 'entertainment', since the devotees took to the streets in a *julus*, a demonstration. We have further elicited the physiological role of the Qur'an in Islamic ritual, as suggested by William Graham contributing to Richard Martin's (ed) *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* who remarked that 'the role of the Qur'an in Muslim life and consciousness illumines with particular clarity an important aspect of scripture that has received little or no attention in modern scholarship, its *oral* and *aural* character, namely its function as *spoken word*.' ¹³⁸ Neal Robinson of Leeds University has stressed that one of the reasons for the Qur'an remaining as 'a veiled text' to both westerners and a majority of contemporary Muslims, is the fact that its aural dimensions are ignored. It has to be experienced aurally rather than be read visually. ¹³⁹ We regard the revelation of the Qur'an, over a span of twenty three years, as the most majestic event in the spiritual history of mankind. These revelations have been recorded as *verbum Dei*. As the Qur'an is extant in every home and recited in every corner of the globe, it is venerated and appraised as Muhammad's eternal living miracle and his greatest gift to mankind in that it ushered in a social revolution that transformed the pagan Arabs, steeped in vice, alcoholism and immorality to being religious virtuosi. It plays a major role in the recitals of the *Ratib*, as it does in the major act of worship, the *Salat*, as well as in all Islamic ritual.

In their latest work, D'Aquili et al., postulate 'that integrating aspects of the

¹³⁸ William A. Graham, 'Qur'an as spoken Word' in Richard C Martin ed., *Approaches*, 24.

¹³⁹ Neal Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text*. (London: SCM Press, 1996), 20.

neurosciences with anthropology and phenomenology is a potent combination indeed for the generation of creative theory.¹⁴⁰ This led to our proposing an alternate hypothesis concerning trance ritual which also reflects on associated phenomena. We base our findings on the physiological effects of the recitation and audition of the Qur'an on firstly its inherent rhyme and rhythmic properties as elucidated by Neal Robinson. Four sources assisted in eliciting the effect of music on physiology; *Music and Trance : A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession* by Gilbert Rouget, and the other by an American ethnomusicologist *Meditations through the Qur'an: Tonal Images in an Aural Culture* by Ernest McClain, which is a study of the ancient tonal influence on the images and metaphors of the Qur'an.¹⁴¹ He stresses the salience of the effect of the aural in contrast to the visual reading of the Qur'an. Muhammad Haroon has analysed the rhythmical pattern inherent in the epiclesis, *Surah al-Fatiha*.¹⁴² The medical aspects span across three research findings: one by Ahmed al-Kadi who had shown that audition of the Qur'an created physiological effects; al-Hashmi's observation on the curative effect of Qur'anic recitals on psychiatric cases declared to be 'incurable' by 'modern' therapy and the most cardinal of all, an epochal study by William Bushell who has elucidated that endorphins are produced during many rituals such as prostrations, chanting, fasting, and meditation in Christian hermits in Ethiopia.¹⁴³ He did not elicit the mechanism or reactions for this production, or its systemic origins which he attributed to the 'opiate system'.

Our thesis suggests the mechanism for this release because it elicits the underlying locus, which is the Immune system. Gelhorn's Theory of 'Tuning of the Autonomic Nervous system' has however served its purpose, which Barbara Lex

¹⁴⁰D'Aquili et al., *Brain Symbol and Experience*, xiii.

¹⁴¹Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance*, and Ernest McClain, *Meditations through the Qur'an: Tonal Images in an Oral Culture*, (London: Sheldon Press, 1981.) It is regrettable that Desmond Desai overlooked this most salient work by an ethnomusicologist.

¹⁴²Muhammad Haron, "Rhythmical Pattern of Surah al-Fatiha" in *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 13, (1993):173-186.

¹⁴³William C. Bushell, 'Psychophysiological and Comparative Analysis of Ascetic-Meditational Discipline: Towards a New Theory of Asceticism' in *Asceticism* Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis. eds. (New York: Oxford U.P., 1995), 554-575.

concluded was speculative, based on 'etic' observations of the physiological alterations during trance rituals, i.e. fast pulse (ergotropic) followed by a lowered pulse (trophotropic), which is inadequate in explaining the altered state of consciousness. Recently D'Aquili and his co-workers proposed a highly speculative cybernetic mechanism of 'cross-phasing', 'warps', and 'retuning' of the Autonomic Nervous System' which cannot be verified in a laboratory setting. They acknowledge that 'psychotropic' drugs, both ancient and modern influence the state of consciousness.¹⁴⁴ Our proposed theory relies on an endogenously produced chemical produced by the immune system, which is simpler, verifiable and holistic. Since the immune system is actively involved in defence and equilibration of the organism, it would also fully accord with D'Aquili et al's adaptational theory of ritual.¹⁴⁵

In Islamic studies, ours is an 'emic' attempt at investigating the religious experiences of Muhammad, ^(B.A.W.) which elicits that Islamic ritual has been 'structured' with the most refined techniques for the express purpose of stimulating the immune system for the induction of a religious experience. The salient feature of all mysticisms is in inducing an altered state of consciousness. Our approach is focussed neither on the description, that is, since phenomenology is marginalised, adequately dealt with by Desai and others, neither on language, nor the verbal aspects of the ritual, since Staals concluded that Mantra are meaningless, whilst Tambiah maintained that mantra contain nonsensical words, as do some of the invocations of the *Ratib*.¹⁴⁶ Lawson and McCauley suggested that when Staal maintained that ritual is meaningless, he did so at an entirely conceptual level. By seeking universal elements of religious ritual, which by definition is confined to *homo sapiens*, including shamanism, healing, asceticism, and the mystic experiences evinced as altered state of consciousness, we arrive at a biological and cognitive level which summates as experience.

Experience is the result of ritual interacting with the 'cognitive matrix' to influence consciousness. Penner stated that 'experience is one of the most obscure

¹⁴⁴Charles Laughlin, et al., *Brain, Symbol and Experience*, 153.

¹⁴⁵Charles Laughlin, G. D'Aquili. 'Ritual and Stress' in D'Aquili et al., *Spectrum*, 280.

¹⁴⁶S.J. Tambiah, 'The Magical Power of Words.' in *Man* (ns) Vol. 3. (1968), 178-208.

aspects of religion and scholars are often tempted to use it as a basis of explanation'.¹⁴⁷ Citing Levi-Strauss's remark that 'what is refractory to explanation is *ipso facto* unsuitable for use in explanation', and 'to attach a different label to the problem, does not solve it', leads us to seek an explanation from an alternate perspective, that of neurobiology to elucidate experience. The level at which we propose to approach the problem is at the 'cutting face' of a stress reaction, at an endocrinal, psychological, and neuro-immunological parameter.

Our metathesis is derived from data collected by Ader and Cohen, two leading exponents of Psycho-neuroimmunology, which combines the fields of Psychology, Neurobiology and Immunology. It enables us to postulate a unifying hypothesis for trances, possession states, healing rituals and other 'religious' phenomena, which is universal and testable.

Although our study is confined to a hypothesis, the biochemical aspects of endorphin release can be confirmed either indirectly by the estimations of circulating monocytes, a routine procedure in a haematological laboratory, (it is the monocytes which produce the endorphins) and also directly by serological tests, as shown by the epochal studies of William Bushell, which our study substantiates.¹⁴⁸

Blelock's proposition that the immune system is a sensory organ, and can be conditioned by Pavlovian techniques, assists in a further advance in that from the data we elucidate the mechanism of endorphin release which occurs in both sacred and profane ritual. Studies in sports medicine have verified endogenous opioid generation during rhythmic activity.¹⁴⁹

Based on the thesis of Bushell and Goodman's search for the ideal posture for entering 'alternate reality' which corresponds to the *jalsa* position or *qa'idah* in the *salat*, we found, serendipitously that Islamic rituals are 'structured' to produce an

¹⁴⁷Hans Penner, 'The Mystical Illusion' in *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*. Steven Katz ed (London: Oxford University Press, 1983), 91.

¹⁴⁸William C. Bushell, 'Psychophysiological and Cross-Cultural Dimensions of Ascetico-Meditational Practices: Special Reference to the Christian Hermits of Ethiopia and Application to theory in Anthropology and Religious Studies'. Ph.D. Thesis. Columbia University. 1995.

¹⁴⁹Tim Noakes, *The Lore of Running* (London: Oxford U. P., 1990), 590-600.

altered state of consciousness. We can therefore postulate that of the five pillars of Islam, four concerned with fasting, prayer, (prostrations) and Haj (which is a *dhikr* ritual), and the *Tahlil* iteration are linked to endorphin release.¹⁵⁰

The *rawatib* (pl) are *dhikr* rituals, of which the *Ratib al-Rifa'iyya* is a prime validation for our thesis that rituals have a psycho-stabilising effect (equilibration) as well as that of altering the state of consciousness. This would justify the verdict of Graham, that previous scholars met their nemesis in attempting to comprehend Islamic ritual centred on theories based on the myth-ritual dyad, rather than on religious experience.

We agree with the proposition of Earl Waugh, that 'Muslim religious sentiment has little official place for myth'.¹⁵¹ Since Islam is a revealed religion, originating as 'religious experience' and the precepts on ritual left by the Prophet (S.A.W.) have been encoded after thorough research by the editors of the Hadith, notably al-Bukhari, this constitutes a cardinal point in our analysis.¹⁵²

In ritual studies a corollary is that 'myth is true for the believer.' In Islam the position is orthogonal to such suppositions. In its place the Revelation forms a foundation for the precepts of the Prophet (S.A.W.). Islamic ritual therefore has a location more veracious than other traditions in affecting 'a dialectic with the transcendent'. Our study reveals that ritual in Islam is unique in being structured for the express purpose of producing a neurobiological effect. Nasr proposes that the dyad of 'doctrine and method' should replace myth and ritual in Islamic studies.¹⁵³

The doctrine originates from the Revelation, i.e. the Qur'an and the method by

¹⁵⁰ *Zakat*, the 'tithe' in Islam is an 'obligatory' charity tax, and constitutes the fourth pillar.

¹⁵¹ Earl Waugh, 'The Popular Muhammad' in R. Martin, ed., *Approaches*, 40ff.

¹⁵² Contrary to much of western scholarship on the authenticity of *Hadith*, Nasr (S.A.W.) states these could not have been forged. Such was the imprint left by the Prophet himself upon the first generation of Muslims, that a forging of new sayings and thus new ways of action, would not have been accepted by the community, since all actions already possessed precedents. Nasr, *Ideals*, 81ff. Annemarie Schimmel insists there are cosmogonic myths, but not theogonic, 'since there was no need to explain how a deity, or deities, came into existence: 'God was, and He still is as He was,' according to famous tradition'. Schimmel, *Phenomenology*, 125.

¹⁵³ Nasr, *Ideals*, 136.

the Precepts (*Summah*) as enunciated by the Prophet. ^(S.A.W.) Nasr holds that doctrine supercedes 'expression' since it is not philosophically derived. Frithjof Schuon terms doctrine as 'metaphysical truth' and method as 'contemplative concentration'.¹⁵⁴

William Chittick in contemporary times has recognised the significance of Islam as a 'religious experience', in that his manual for students is actually a commentary on the concurrent experience of the Prophet and his Noble Companions concerning the ternary of *islam*, *iman*, and *ihsan*, the apostolic, theological and political aspects of any religion, but Islam being distinguished by *ihsan*, an experiential component.¹⁵⁵

The last words from Lawson and McCauley in refuting Staal's position on the uselessness of ritual, is their citing his argument 'about the biological basis of both the existence and persistence of human ritual,' which requires that 'either ritual serves an adaptive function or that it is associated with other systems (in a pleiotropic fashion) which have adaptive functions'.¹⁵⁶

Our study reveals the sophistication of the scholars of the New World who three decades ago had already established the biogenetic structuralist school to explain ritual behaviour. In contrast the Old World researchers, as reflected in the Gifford Lectures, have only recently derived from a philosophical basis, the salience of biology in religion and ritual.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴Frithjof Schuon, *Understanding Islam*. (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1989), 106.

¹⁵⁵Frithjof Schuon, *Christianity/Islam: Essays on Esoteric Ecumenism*. (London: World Wisdom Books, 1985), 185. Chittick's Student Manual is described elsewhere.

¹⁵⁶Lawson & McCauley, *Re'thinking*, 169, 141.

¹⁵⁷Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred* (Cambridge.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 29.

Religion like art is a homoversal phenomenon. . . . religion would have been part and parcel of the whole emergent reticulum consisting of the dramatic development of the consciousness, new forms of social institutions, new ways of locomotion, new ways of interacting with the natural environment (diet, carrying, using and making tools, symbol generation, development of language, etc). Religion is the extension of instinctual drives within the human being, continuous with animal behaviour.

J.S. Kruger ¹

Because of the 'hybrid character' of religion located between biology and culture, Burkert, calls for an 'interdisciplinary meeting of methods: derivation should go together with interpretation.'² Our study embraces neurobiology, and substantiates the findings of William Bushell that many of the rituals of the ascetics produce endorphins.³ Since it is the stimulation of the immune system, which is the homeostatic or defence system of the body, which is the locus of endorphin production, we unpack the effect of Islamic rituals which are singularly structured to produce opioid peptides which then induce an altered state of consciousness. The altered states of consciousness cause the phenomenology of mystic, ecstatic and possession states in the religious traditions of mankind.⁴ The biogenetic structuralist

¹J. S. Kruger, *Along Edges* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 1995), 68, 115, 118.

²Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1996), 23. He maintains that 'sociobiology cannot be verified in the case of religion,...on the basis of the co-evolution of genes and culture'. Our study argues this statement in Chapter Six.

³William C. Bushell, 'Psychophysiological and Comparative Analysis of Ascetico-Meditational Discipline: Toward a New Theory of Asceticism'. in Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis. eds. *Asceticism* (New York: Oxford U.Press, 1995), 554-575.

⁴Whilst possession states are pathological, the 'trance states' are a normal physiological reaction to stress. It may be that prolonged or excessive production of Opioids

(continued...)

school holds that all ritual is for the purpose of adaptation, and that the voluntary induction of trance states is an exclusive endowment of *Homo sapiens*. This is due to three 'new' and distinctive facets of *Homo sapiens* which are: the human speech production and perception systems; culture could only have evolved by the facility of language; and encephalisation, which was 'not the result of evolution but of neoteny'.⁵ Tobias cites Dobzhansky's two transcendences, one being life itself, and the other what Dobzhansky and Ayala called the second transcendence, when a great step forward occurred by which *Homo habilis* 'had been enabled by its cerebral revolution to attain a new mode of evolution, as a speech-bound, culture dependant hominid.' The implication of a cladogenetic change resulted in *Homo sapiens*.⁶ He alone had the capability of being *Homo religiosus*.⁷

The presence of sophisticated and refined rituals is needed for the production of endogenous opioids, requiring an extremely complex and integrated web of structures which are highly unlikely to be due to the vagaries of chance or hominid evolution. Walter Burkert suggests that Neanderthal man could not have survived in a harsh environment without complex and intricate speech and defence mechanisms such as seen in the sacred ritual of *Homo religiosus*. Since biology cannot explain the sudden transition to *Homo loquens* or *Homo artifex* it indicates a case for creationism, as far as *Homo religiosus* is concerned.⁸

(...continued)

prevents their metabolisation and hence the patient remains in a trance or 'dissociated mental state'. (Arnold Ludwig). However, even Ludwig's propositions on dissociation have been displaced by the chemical revolution in Psychiatry.

⁵ Philip Lieberman, *The Biology and Evolution of Language* (London: Harvard University Press, 1984), 332. By neoteny we follow the proposition of S.J. Gould and N. Eldridge, 'Punctuated Equilibria: The tempo and mode of evolution reconsidered.' in *Paleobiology* 3, 115-151. Neoteny: the sudden appearance of highly differentiated structures without evidence of preceeding changes.

⁶ Phillip V. Tobias, 'Recent Advances in the Evolution of the Hominds with Especial reference to Brain and Speech.' in *Scripta Varia* 50, (Pontifical Academy of Sciences: (May 1983), 85-140. Cladogenic: A sudden branching out.

⁷ J. S. Kruger, *Along Edges*, 59. 'Religion is more than godsdiens'. On the otherhand one can still be religious and not have seen the inside of a church! *Homo religiosus* is in perpetual Quest for the sacred. It is acknowledged that attending Church or reading the Bible is not a 'religious' act, compared to the Qur'an which clearly enjoins reciting it 'in measured fashion', as an act of worship 'ibadah.

⁸ Walter Burkett, *Creation of the Sacred*, 19.

d'Aquili et al's The 'groundbreaking' epic of D'Aquili et al., which relates consciousness to brain physiology, cultural symbols and rituals, and the experiences of the mystics through 'social drama' seems to be an answer to the elucidation of trance rituals, as the perpetual quest of man for the sacred. The mechanism and biochemistry of trance rituals poses the question of a providentially 'designed structure and unique function'. Our work, following the trend in all post-modern research demonstrates the necessity for a multidisciplinary approach to religious phenomena. Walter Burkert concurs with us, albeit on a slightly different level: 'the impetus for biological survival appears (to be) internalised in the codes of religion'.⁹

Definitions of Religion

Our study surveys the cultural landscape at the Cape by consideration of the various prevailing expressions of the sacred. It is no longer disputed that an element of the sacred is pervasive to all humans. Rappaport observed that neither history nor anthropology knows of societies from which religion has been totally absent', whilst Walter Burkert has demonstrated that man, *Homo sapiens* is *Homo religiosus*.¹⁰ William Cantwell Smith also supported the view that 'religion is universal to human societies' and that 'primitive societies without religion have never been found'.¹¹ Concerning the study of religion, Kitagawa commented in 1953 that: 'seventy five years ago it was widely held in universities that a necessary qualification for an 'impartial' or scientific study of religion, including the religion of other communities, was that the student should be without a faith of his own, be not *engage* at the present time, and the contrary view is not unfamiliar'.¹²

Of the various definitions of religion, ranging from Tylor's emphasis on the supernatural, Durkheim's focus on the sacred, to Paul Tillich's concern with the ultimate, we prefer Luckmann's view of religion as embracing 'the transcendent and humanising aspects of human behaviour'. Thomas Luckmann succinctly summates

⁹Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred*, 33.

¹⁰Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred*, 19.

¹¹ W.C. Smith, *Meaning*, 203.

¹² Mircea Eliade and Joseph M Kitagawa, *The History of Religions* (Chicago: University Press, 1953), 45.

that 'religion is that activity which makes human beings human'... 'which allows human beings to rise above or go beyond the purely biological functioning of their physical organisms'.¹³ In contrast J. S. Kruger does not admit a metaphysical dimension when he claims that 'religions are historically grown complexes, and that 'religion is a sociocultural, historical, linguistic convention, integrating individuals into a symbol-sharing community'.¹⁴ Since he empathises with the biogenetic structuralist school, religions become to him, 'vast models of the world, prescribing how their adherents should think about it and act in it'.¹⁵ However the problem with this definition is the absence of the notion of the 'transcendent', which he later modified, as cited below. Huston Smith extends Walter Burkert's view of *Homo religiosus* by adding science as another component that is present in all human society. By science is meant a 'working knowledge of the world, the distillation of the experience of generations'.¹⁶

We find Huston Smith's schematic of the 'sacred spectrum' as being divided into three bands, as folk religions which are informal, fluid, preliterate, often polytheistic, associated with Robert Redfield's term of 'little traditions' which lap around the shores of the 'great traditions'. The latter are historically based, inaugurated by revelation and scripture, and are usually monotheistic 'main-line churches', to be more holistically descriptive of our perspective. The little traditions cannot really be termed 'little', since they represent the totally sacred to its believers. What we approve of in addition is the inclusion of the third band in the schema of Huston Smith, that of 'mysticism' which 'are the arteries' coursing through the great traditions. The dynamic, living expression of the great and little traditions constituted by 'mysticism' contrasts with the static, textualist interpretation and expression. In Islam the two poles, that is, *eros*-orientated *tariqah* and the *nomos*-orientated *shari'ah* complement each other in an integral manner. Kruger claims that ritual preceded belief, since he traces

¹³Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion: Problem of Religion in Modern Society* cited in David Chidester, 'Primal Religions' in *A Southern African Guide to World Religions* John W de Grunchy and Martin Prozesky, eds. (Cape Town: David Phillip, 1991), 15.

¹⁴J. S. Kruger, *Along Edges*, 114.

¹⁵J. S. Kruger, *Along Edges*, 113.

¹⁶Huston Smith, 'Spiritual Personality Types: The Sacred Spectrum' in *In Quest of the Sacred*, eds. S.H. Nasr and Katherine O'Brien, (Oakton. VA: Foundation for Traditional Studies, 1994), 45.

ritual to be present down the evolutionary scale. This does not pose a problem if the word 'religious' does not enter into the debate, since animals are known to display social and emotional behaviour. The term transcendent constitutes the idea of a sacred 'Other' which requires ritual to bridge the mundane world and the 'other'. S. H. Nasr insists that belief, or doctrine precede 'method' or ritual, where doctrine in Islam requires testimony of a Deity *ab initio*.¹⁷ We shall analyse the structure of ritual below to differentiate between sacred and secular.¹⁸

The Islamic perspective is orthogonal to Kruger's view. Belief has to precede ritual, the latter being divinely appointed and for which the Prophet served as a living exemplar, *uswah*, and preceptor to the fledgling Muslim community. He demonstrated the rituals or methods which were 'designed' for entering what Goodman terms 'alternate reality', or in an Eliadian sense, the 'techniques for inducing ecstasy'.¹⁹ One of the difficulties encountered in the penetration into religious groups is that one had either to be a co-religionist, and even then, if one was not sympathetic to their specific expression of belief, reticence and evasions were encountered as shown in our introductory remarks. William Cantwell Smith remarked that only that data can be considered valid if any observation or comment on other religions, is in consonance with that of a follower of that religion.²⁰ Schubel observed that 'the question of what is authoritative and who is to be trusted in matters of religion was constantly in his mind'.²¹ The problem is still not resolved as beliefs are dependent on linguistic competence, coupled with a knowledge of the tradition and its aims and eschatological objectives. A knowledge of Arabic is essential in order to derive a proper understanding of phenomena in Islam. However, it is not essential that a participant be language competent at all in enacting rituals. Sperber has argued that 'participants

¹⁷ S. H. Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1975), 36.

¹⁸We define sacred as the prerogative of *Homo religiosus*, following David Chidester, 'as being set apart from ordinary life, as beliefs and practices relating to supernatural beings, powers, or forces'. In de Gruchy and Prozesky, *Guide*, 13.

¹⁹Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (London: Arkana, [1964] 1988).

²⁰ W. C. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religions* (London: OUP, 1964), 202.

²¹Vernon James Schubel, *Religious Performance in Contemporary Islam*. (Columbia: University South Carolina Press, 1993), xiii.

employ symbol systems uncomprehendingly', that symbols do not have to have meaning for the adept.²²

Of the diverse definitions of religion J. S. Kruger has modified the biogenetic structuralist definition of religion to be: 'a dialectic between the synthesising faculty of the human mind operating at its most inclusive level, and the urge to radically transcend the given'. Elsewhere Kruger states that 'religion is orientation'... 'a never ending series of balancing acts, a receptive creative interplay with reality'. He does not define what that 'reality is'. We understand 'transcendent', to mean another dimension, which the Qur'an terms *al-ghaib*.²³ Kruger defines transcendent as 'the moment to moment adaptation of the organism to its environment', and again 'this movement is an outward or expanding movement and inward or integrating' reducing transcendent to a mundane dimension, a noun.²⁴ This is agonal to Farid Esack's heuristic proposition of Islam not as a noun, derived from *s-l-m* but as a verb, denoting dynamism rather than stagnation.²⁵ Kruger spoke above of the emergence of new forms or ways. This could be said of Islam, which was revealed for the purpose of correcting the evils in society and the aberrations introduced into beliefs regarding the Transcendent. Yasien Mohamed has defined *Fitrah* to be a spiritual state, 'because all children are born spiritually pure'. However, according to the Qur'anic verse 'there is no change in Allah's creation', *fitrah* refers more to anatomical equivalence, with which every human is endowed. 'It is his parents who make him a Jew, a Magian or a Christian' means that metaphysical dimensions, beliefs and behaviour have to be instilled and spirituality has to be developed.²⁶ For the purpose of our study, the Islamic paradigm of religion is the melding of belief in the transcendent with patterned behaviour

²² Thomas Lawson and Robert N. McCauley, *Rethinking Religion* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1990), 141.

²³ Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran: Semantics of the Koranic Weltanschauung*. (Tokyo: Keio Institute, 1964), 88-94. His semantic model provides for a separation between *dunya* mundane and *al-Akhirah* which is the eschatological separation between man and the Transcendent.

²⁴ J. S. Kruger, *Along Edges*, 57.

* ²⁵ Farid Esack, *Pluralism*, 126. He thus 'redefines' Islam. See Mohammad Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 15.

²⁶ Following S.H. Nasr, *Ideals and Realities in Islam*, 15, we prefer the terms 'Doctrine and Method' instead of Myth and Ritual as constituents of Religion. The process of spiritual development is termed *tazkiyah*.

following the Prophetic model, (structured ritual) as part of a journey to a defined eschatological destination. Mohammad Arkoun defines Islam etymologically as 'giving over to someone, meaning oneself over to God...entrusting oneself over,...to demonstrate in extreme fashion the sort of outpouring of love, the sort of transformation, that leads the believer to accept without reservation God's call and God's teaching...to move towards God, towards the absolute, toward transcendence,...and to feel promoted to a higher level of existence.'²⁷ Elsewhere he defines Islam as the human response to the Revelation, much as Marshall Hodgson regards the Qur'an as 'a challenge'... 'which is the Word transcribed by human hands onto parchment or paper collected in a bound book, a *mushaf*, that one manipulates, transports, reads, and interprets in order to define Islam'.²⁸ The interpretation is not without a paradigm, that of the *Sunnah*, as understood and taught by the Messenger himself. Fazlur Rahman laments that contemporary Muslim scholars have 'translated' or interpreted the verses in a 'tendentious fashion' because the context of the revelation was not considered. The Qur'an was not regarded as a living, dynamic response of the Divine to the problems affecting man in his mundane and religious life.²⁹ There are numerous 'consoling' *Surahs* in the Qur'an.³⁰

The breathing of the Divine Spirit into man implies that man possesses a link with his Creator, according to the Qur'anic verse: 'We breathed into him of Our

²⁷Mohammad Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam*, 15.

²⁸Mohammad Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam*, 16.

²⁹Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980), 1. The various verses commencing with the initial imperative *Qul* (Say:) were meant as a reply to questions concerning the trinity (Surah *Ahad*), the forces of evil, sorcery, and *jinn* mischief, (*Surahs Mawazathani*), the nature of the *ruh*, permissibility of wine, gambling, spoils of war, all elicited the reply to be given to the questioners. Taken out of context, the meanings become blurred. Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet is reported to have said: 'A time will come when people will no longer recognise the black from the white of the Qur'an', implying that the meanings of the written word would be cognised no differently from the 'white' the blank parts, i.e. recited only and not acted upon. The white also refer to the unwritten questions which have to be inferred from the replies.

³⁰These were revealed when the Prophet was undergoing severe trials and the pagans used to taunt him, even confining him to a valley, and applying sanctions against the fledgling community of early Muslims, e.g. *Surahs* 93, 'Did We not find you an orphan and gave you refuge? *Surah* 94 exhorts 'aft every difficulty comes ease whilst *Surah* 108 consoles of the 'good' granted to him.

spirit'.³¹ Muslim authorities have defined it to occur at 120 days of foetal age, for the purpose of endowing a legal entity on the conceptus. The link has to be developed and fostered by structured ritual, by a process called *tazkiyyah*, a purification in order to refine, increase (from *z-k-y*) and strengthen the bond with the transcendent Creator. The mystics believe that the *ruh* is in a constant yearning to return to its Creator. It is in a state of interaction with the higher centres of the intellect, to elevate man, whilst the *nafs* drags him to baser physiological instincts.³² This yearning is embraced by the 'two testimonies' inherent in the two phrases of the *Shahada* linked without a conjunction.³³ The iteration of the credo in the rituals of Islam, especially the *dhikr*, ensures a firmer and stronger link, and is described in the *Hadith* as the best of *Dhikr*, (*afdal adh-dhikr*), which at each repetition 'renews faith'.

Similar to the Islamic view, W.C. Smith defined religion as a human response to Ultimate Reality, whilst Radhakrishnan said that religion is a particular expression of a universal mode of an insight into reality'. James Cox argues that 'no universal definition of religion exists', which most authorities affirm. Cumsty defines religion 'to be at least 'as man's feeling for and understanding of the nature of ultimate reality and man's relating to that perceived ultimate reality, the mode of this relating in both its cognitive and affective elements varying as the perceived nature of the ultimate reality varies'³⁴

³¹The 'breathing in' is mentioned in 3 verses, 15:29, 38:76 and 32:9, where in the creation of man, he is given hearing, seeing and hearts (feeling). The sequence is salient as the organ of hearing is always mentioned before vision and even the heart in the Qur'an, as argued in Chapter Six.

³²G.M. Karim, 'Psychiatry in the Qur'an.' *Proceedings of the Second International Conference on the Qur'an*. (New Delhi: Hamdard, 1982). Following al-Muhasibi's model of the structure of Human consciousness, see Margaret Smith's Chapter 'The Psychological theory of al-Muhasibi' in '*al-Muhasibi: An Early Mystic of Baghdad*' (London: Cambridge University Press, 1935), 187-210.

³³ According to D'Aquili et al., Religious ritual behaviour has an analogue with animal behaviour, but at a higher level. The australopithecines had the minimal neural requirements for myth structures and religious ritual but it is unlikely that any elaborate myths or rituals could have developed in the absence of a spoken language. Cited by J. S. Kruger, *Along Edges*, 152. He states that Chimpanzees share 99% of genes with man. The vital 1% difference is responsible for the acquisition of language, the ability to utilise institutionalised ritual and for the voluntary induction trance states. Laughlin, et al., *Brain, Symbol*, 190.

³⁴J.S. Cumsty, 'A Model of Religious Change in Socio-Cultural Dimensions' in *Religion in South* (continued...)

Other definitions range from 'a study of the sacred, ultimate reality, the transcendent, to Geertz's rather circumspect definition: 'a religion is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful pervasive and long lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic'.³⁵ Walter Burkert criticises this definition by noting a 'characteristic paradox, that of the symbolic being uniquely realistic', and that the 'practical aspects' of a religion are underestimated by Geertz.³⁶ Whilst Shubel has utilised Geertz's definition for a study of the correlated ritual of the *Ta'ziah* performed in Eastern countries, we find it inadequate for our study on Trance ritual of the *Ratib*, as it has no reference to the sacred, nor the specific type of ritual that is under purview which is presented as 'drama'.

Talal Asad is incisively critical of both Geertz and Gellhorn who popularised a dichotomy of urban, rural, great and little, textual and folk Islam, or *shari'ah* (textual) and *tariqah* (village) Islams.³⁷ Asad's definition accords with our study, that religion is empowerment. He argues that Geertz's definition 'lacks the notion of power', which is a particular aspect of the *Ratib*, and specifically of trance as a healing ritual. A trance is a form of behaviour, often described as bizarre or weird. It is a religious experience, and our definition of religion should include this aspect which could perhaps be embraced under Geertz's 'moods and motivations' encompassing a psychological perspective. However Geertz was not specific about the 'sacred' dimension in his definition.

According to Lawson and McCauley, religious ritual systems have both cultural and cognitive dimensions, which thus allows for psychological elements in the paradigm of the definition. Their statement that cultural anthropology and psychology have a close relationship since all deal with output of the human mind would affirm our

(...continued)

Africa 1, (2 July 1980), 59-70.

³⁵ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 90.

³⁶ Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred*, 5.

³⁷ Talal Asad, *Anthropological*, 6.

standpoint.³⁸ Since they state that 'human beings represent their most cherished values in encoded form', we aim to decode the ritual of the early Muslims at the Cape.³⁹

Pejorative views of ritual: from primitive/civilised, rural/urban/ to popular/little when applied to Islam are no longer considered to be objective or valid. This failing is

surprisingly evinced in the work of contemporary colleagues such as Ebrahim Moosa * and

* and Abdulkadir Tayob, who speak of some rituals as folk, or low Islam.⁴⁰ This implies that a lower form of piety is ascribed to 'folk rituals' compared to that of the 'high'

religion of the *'ulama*. Mukkadam favoured the compounded term 'common religious practices' which he equates with 'popular'.⁴¹ al-Zein disputed such notions over two

decades ago.⁴² According to Faruqi, ritual was either normative, derived from the scriptures, and from the practices of the Prophet, or 'descriptive, which we regard

rather as 'popular' expressions.⁴³ Asad argued that 'Islam is Islam, whether practised by a saint or a schoolmaster, a bedouin or even an untutored parent.'⁴⁴ Richard Martin

separates rituals into 'great and little' when referring to their *textual* or *contextual* aspects.⁴⁵ Ritual in local context he regards as 'popular'. We consider, that Islamic

ritual be classified rather as *experiential* or as *scriptural* which is inclusive of a very

ubiquitous form of piety amongst Muslims, that of the *Rawatibs*, composed entirely of

Dhikr. Richard Martin has omitted mention of the *Rawatib* in his chapter on

³⁸ Lawson and McCauley, *Rethinking Religion*, 68.

³⁹ Lawson and McCauley, *Rethinking Religion*, 36.

* ⁴⁰Ebrahim Moosa, 'Discursive Voices of Diaspora Islam in Southern Africa.' in *Jurnal Anthropologi dan Sosiologi* 20, Kuala Lumpur. (1993), 29-60. See also: Abdulkader Tayob, * *Islamic Resurgence in South Africa* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1995), 71, 73, 189.

* ⁴¹Ahmed Mukkadam, *Muslim Common Religious Practices at the Cape*. M.A. Dissertation. (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, April 1990), 1.

⁴²Abdul Hamid el-Zein, 'Beyond Ideology and Theology: The Search for an Anthropology of Islam' in *Annual Review of Anthropology* 6, (1977), 227-54.

⁴³Isma'il Faruqi, 'Science and Tradition' in *Zygon* 2, no. 3 (Sept. 1967), 230-245.

⁴⁴Talal Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1986), 15.

⁴⁵Richard C. Martin, *Islamic Studies* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1996), 206.

Communal Ritual Practices, and devotes barely a page to mysticism⁴⁶

The purist that Geertz was, often caused him to disparage a psychological approach to ritual. We found his remarks to be challenging and worthy of discourse. He failed to realise that 'cultural activity is a form of behaviour' and as the discipline of psychology is a study of behaviour, i.e institutionalised behaviour, or ritual, is thus amenable to psychological analysis.⁴⁷ Yet he lamented that there were 'no theoretical advances of major importance' in the field of social anthropology' since it draws 'what concepts it uses from a very narrowly defined intellectual field'.⁴⁸ His approach is semiotic and it is surprising that although he later does find a place for psychology but neglects physiology.⁴⁹ He held that 'nothing will discredit a semiotic approach more quickly than allowing it to drift into a combination of intuitionism and alchemy, no matter how elegantly the intuitions are expressed and how modern the alchemy is made to look.'⁵⁰ Goodman only regards that behaviour or activity as religious if it results in an experience of an alternate reality.⁵¹ We submit that this is precisely the position of Islamic ritual.

The distinctive position of Islam as religion

Islam could not be a new religion. The manner of its birth in the inhospitable desert of the Hijaz to an unlettered Prophet in *oral* form signifies a refocussed religion for a scripture-less warring people, steeped in alcoholism and vice, where humans rights were flouted and slaves were oppressed, in dire need of guidance, was

⁴⁶Martin, *Islamic Studies*, 17.

⁴⁷ He opines that 'to undertake a study of cultural activity...activity in which symbolism forms the positive content (is) to enter into a mentalistic world of introspective psychology...and wander there forever in a haze of 'Cognitions', 'Affections', 'Conations' and other elusive entities'....by relegating it to psychology, that raffish outcast discipline to which social anthropologists are forever consigning phenomena they are unable to deal with, within the framework of a denatured Durkheimianism.' C. Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 109.

⁴⁸ Geertz, *Interpretation*, 87.

⁴⁹ Geertz, *Interpretations*, 93.

⁵⁰ Geertz, *Interpretations*, 30.

⁵¹Felicitas D. Goodman, *Ecstasy, Ritual and Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 22ff.

being revealed.⁵² It is a civilisation based on its preceding sister faiths. It is a *Din* according to Attas, a 'debt' derived from the arabic roots of *d-n*. 'It is a *profoundly* lived in human experience. The very name of the religion, Islam is the definition of religion: submission to God'.⁵³

The Qur'an is the 'central paradigm' in the Muslim community which is regarded as veridical text, antecedent to Islam as an institution. It is a classic example of a religious experience *par excellence*, a unique phenomenon.⁵⁴ This is supplemented by the *Sunnah*, or practices as exemplified by Muhammad. According to the Qur'anic verse concerning ideal behaviour: 'There is already for you (plural) in the Messenger of Allah, *the* most elegant of Exemplars *uswatun hasanah*'. The *Hadith* comprises details, substantiated by a chain of narrators, of the actions and explications of the most minute details of the Prophet's life, leaving no place for doubt or indecision in Muslim private and social life. Therefore, the creation of a 'model' of Islam, in the 'singular Eliadian sense of having mythic, theophantic qualities' would be fallacious.⁵⁵ Earl Waugh therefore concludes that 'Muslim religious sentiment has little place for myth', but myth does exist at 'popular' levels in the Eliadian sense as in cosmogonic myths.

The Revelation of the Qur'an, which was regarded as 'sacred speech', served as both the starting point as well as the final pinnacle of the divine imperative to man.⁵⁶

⁵² This does not imply that they did possess virtues or valour. The women of pre-Islamic Arabia states Nicholson had 'a high position and their influence great. They were free to choose their husbands, and could return if ill-treated or displeased to their own people. In some cases they even offered themselves in marriage and had the right of divorce. They were regarded not as slaves and chattels, but as equals and companions.' R.A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge: University Press, 1962), 88-89.

⁵³ Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam, Secularism and the Philosophy of the Future*. (London: Mansell Press, 1985), xv.

⁵⁴ Earl H. Waugh, 'The Popular Muhammad' in Richard C. Martin ed. *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*. (Tucson: Univ Arizona Press, 1985), 48.

⁵⁵ Martin, *Approaches*, 48.

⁵⁶ Richard C. Martin, 'Understanding the Qur'an in Text and Context'. in *History of Religion* 21, (1982), 361-384.

It commenced with the stirring command: 'Proclaim!'⁵⁷ Its challenges ushered in a momentous revolution in social and religious behaviour, transforming half of the then known geographic world with amazing rapidity. The Qur'an is also referred to as a *mu'jizah*, a miracle, from *'ijaz* referring to the wondrous nature of its Revelation. The Prophetic miracles differ from the saintly *karamat* which are regarded as miracles of a lesser degree.

Ritual in Islam

Ritual has achieved considerable currency in recent years amongst a wide range of scholars including biologists, ethologists and sociobiologists. It is also concerned with complex signalling systems which animals employ in a wide variety of situations to convey information- especially to sexual partners. These forms of communication between animals are highly patterned and have been metaphorically described as examples of 'ritualisation'. Lacking an account at the psychological and social level for ritual systems, and lacking developed holistic semantics, Staal looks to these types of study as a source of speculation about patterned behaviours exemplified in ritual. 'Ritualization' is the view that such patterned behaviours serve a biological function, and, therefore, can be explained by the principles of natural selection. Therefore he appeals to the process of ritualization to account for both the origin and persistence of human ritual. Staal's version of the evolutionary argument for the biological origins of ritual is that it is 'empty activity which, because it has neither meaning, goal, nor aim, requires some causal-functional account'. His biological reductionism is closely related to sociobiology which explains social facts in biological terms. We reveal that his view is too narrowly focussed and misses the point of the sacred.

Lawson and McCauley made a distinction between secular and sacred ritual, by proposing that all religious rituals always do something to something or to somebody and either directly involve or presuppose the participation of the gods, or

⁵⁷The first word of the Revelation is variously translated as 'read', 'recite', but the term 'proclaim' is preferable in the context of a divine message being sent for the reformation of a society steeped in idolatry, vice and violence, alcoholism and subjugation of the weak, the deprived and poor. Makkan society was intensely capitalistic, exploitive and patriarchal. Females had no rights at all. Muhammad accorded them full rights and thus revolutionised Makkan society when he spoke out on human rights.

superhuman agents.⁵⁸ This would accord with Goodman's definition of a 'religious experience' as the sole criterion for a religious ritual. An important qualification of religious ritual is that it had to have an 'instrumental dimension as construed within the religion's conceptual scheme'. Rituals are actions, which serve the purpose of communication or of homeostasis. More in keeping with our thesis, Walter Burkert suggests that rituals arise as a response to 'anxiety or fear which it is designed to control'.⁵⁹ Ritual, we maintain has a homeostatic function, which d'Auili and others of his school term 'equilibration'. It is a process rather than a state of equilibrium. The rituals employed by the oppressed enabled them to be empowered. Trance rituals were used by women, amongst the Hindu, and by slaves amongst the Muslims, both oppressed, 'to demonstrate the power of our faith against the flesh', a cliché first used by du Plessis, and repeated by some imams recently in a television programme.⁶⁰

Ritual has social power through bonding into a brotherhood, and as Cumsty maintained 'of belonging'. On a personal basis, it is well known that ritual has a role in alleviating Stress. The mechanism, which is neurobiological, will be discussed in Chapter six. Thus we cannot accept the view of Lawson and McCauley when they insist that "although some aspects of human ritual may have biological foundations related to the sorts of patterned behaviours of animals that ethologists have studied, we maintain in virtue of the claims we defend...that important systematic features of religious ritual are not exhaustively explicable in such terms."⁶¹ They claim that in all religious ritual, 'the participants re-arrange the furniture in their religious world,' which implies diverse cosmologies.⁶² Since the efficacy of Religious rituals is not something that can be empirically assessed, the authors claim that this may lead to doubts that 'not only are the gods sometimes fickle, but various superhuman agents may, on occasion, not be up to the task', which the *Ratib* adept would attribute to 'lack of

⁵⁸E. Thomas Lawson and Robert N. McCauley, *Rethinking Religion*, 125.

⁵⁹Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred*, 36.

⁶⁰Imam Gafieldien of Bosmont 22-03-1997. SABC Channel Three. Patricia Glynn. I. D. du Plessis, *The Cape Malays* (Cape Town: Balkema, 1942), 25-28.

⁶¹ Lawson and McCauley, *Rethinking Religion*, 138.

⁶² Lawson and McCauley, *Rethinking Religion*, 190.

faith⁶³ We propose a metabolic 'reductionism' for this lack of response. Staal displays an antisemantic thesis on ritual, when he 'does not go gentle into that dark biological underground, in search of the hidden biological factors which might account for ritual behaviour, but enthusiastically embraces evolutionary speculations'. Staal finds what he is looking for in ritualisation ritual'.⁶⁴ We elucidate a thoroughly biological explanation for ritual.

The position of Ritual and Myth in Islam

Graham found problems with the term of 'myth' in studying ritual in Islam, and concluded, with Denny, that the term is not properly applicable to Islam because of its revelatory basis. There 'are cosmogonic myths, but not theogonic myths', as Annemarie Schimmel suggested.⁶⁵ A problem which arose early in our investigations was that novices were performing the *Ratib* ignorant of its historical origins, of its mystical links, its various constituents, and even the verbal aspects of the recitals. Yet the performances were successful. Sperber explained this phenomenon by stating that 'anywhere humans engage in symbolic activities, they typically do not take time to worry about exegetical questions'.⁶⁶ This would explain the ignorance of the theoretical basis of the *Ratib* by participants and in some cases by the imams as well. Whilst 'Levi-Strauss, Sperber and Staal have all seen the importance of a specifically reflexive type of semantic holism for the semantic analysis of symbolic systems', Staal claims that rituals are meaningless, whilst Tambiah maintains that mantra are meaningless, revealing the endroad for philosophy and speculation in ritual studies.⁶⁷

Biological reductionism is ultimately endorsed by Staal and we entertain the suggestion of Lawson and McCauley that there is 'a pervasive trend in all disciplines towards Holistic analysis.' The methodology employed in semantics we extend to that of ritual from a biogenetic-structuralist perspective, a 'structure' comparable to a

⁶³ Lawson and McCauley, *Rethinking Religion*, 165.

⁶⁴ Lawson and McCauley, *Rethinking Religion*, 166-167.

⁶⁵ Annemarie Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God* (New York: SUNY, 1994), 125. There are no theogonic myths, as 'there was no need to explain how a deity, or deities came into existence. 'God was, and still is as He was' according to the Hadith.

⁶⁶ Lawson and McCauley, *Rethinking Religion*, 139.

⁶⁷ Lawson and McCauley, *Rethinking Religion*, 148.

linguistic symbolisation.⁶⁸ In response to the claim by Cassirer that 'religion is born when people begin to think that myth leads to belief', and Sperber's claim that 'there are not only degrees of belief but also kinds of believing', we study the *Ratib* as a religious ritual, as a kind of belief, grounded in Islam, as a mirror of early Muslim piety at the Cape. We embrace semantics, symbols, historical narratives, and 'essentialist texts', the Qur'an and *hadith* (narrative) as a source for ritual, recognising that Islamic ritual has no place for myth in its structures. Graham agrees with Adams in describing the frustration regarding the study of Islamic ritual, and concurs that the prospects for an approach to Islam through myth and ritual is not optimistic, which by this study, we show to be unfounded.⁶⁹

Can there be Ritual without Myth?

Alleyn Diesel was apprehensive of the fact that South African Indians were loosing 'contact with the related mythology, and that without the support of mythology the ritual may die out.'⁷⁰ On the other hand she observes that 'the popularity of the ritual is growing'.⁷¹ This is analogous to the position of the *Ratib* where there is considerable loss of 'myth', but it has lately been drawing more adherents. Lawson and McCauley state that ritual is efficacious, 'even if done uncomprehendingly', and our explication is that a ritual will continue to be practised, because 'it satisfies a need' and that ritual is addictive.⁷² The role of ritual in the resolution of stress is a fundamental theme of this thesis.

Neusner's observation that in 'early Rabbinic Judaism, there is a considerable corpus of laws which prescribe the way things are done but make no effort to interpret

⁶⁸ Lawson and McCauley, *Rethinking Religion*, 148.

⁶⁹ William A. Graham, 'Islam in the Mirror of Ritual.' in A. Hounnision and Speros Vryonis, eds. *Islam's Understanding of Itself* (Malibu: Undena, 1983), 53-71.

⁷⁰ Alleyn Diesel, 'Ritual Drama in the Worship of the goddess Draupadi.' *Journal for the Study of Religion* 7, no. 1 (1984), 65-94.

⁷¹ Allen Diesel, 'Hindu Firewalking in Natal' *Journal for the Study of Religion* 3, no. 1 (1982), 17-33.

⁷² Alleyn Diesel, 'The Worship and Iconography of the Hindu folk Goddesses in Natal.' *Journal for the Study of Religion*, vol. 5, no. 2: 3-30. In this article she argues 'that these goddess traditions offer strength and dynamism to individuals and communities in dealing with hardship and tragedy.' We demonstrate the biological mechanisms for this.

what is being done'. These constitute ritual entirely lacking in myth, let alone theological explanation.' This position conforms to the Islamic praxis. The Qur'an contains numerous prescriptions regarding ritual, without explanation, which the *Hadith* often clarify.⁷³ In the early years of Islam, the Prophet himself was available to provide comprehensive explanation for everything that the Qur'an enjoined about ritual, and rituals were demonstrated by him to the early community. After his death, both the Qur'an and the *Hadith* were codified.⁷⁴ It was then left to the *khalifa*, his successors, his Companions and Imams, and later scripturalists to interpret and explain these rituals. Amongst them were the mystics such as al-Ghazzali who gave the most esoteric dimensions and explanations.⁷⁵ The *Hadith* were codified after the Qur'an and their redaction was only completed by the ninth century CE.⁷⁶

Bowen claims that amongst the world's major religious rituals, 'Islamic ritual has been one of the most intractable to anthropological analysis'.⁷⁷ The primary reason for this may be the failure to discern the 'masks' under which Islam parades. Kritzeck and Lewis, in their study *Islam in Africa* complained that 'Islam wears many faces in Africa'.⁷⁸ It is our contention from perusal of previous studies that the core ritual of early Islam at the Cape, presented as drama, eluded later Muslims, who also failed to discern the mystical mask of the ritual of *Ratib*. Annemarie Schimmel has remedied this lacuna by her comprehensive study on the phenomenological approach to Islam. In an

⁷³ Although the formal prayer, the *salat* is mentioned 345 times, no details, for example of the two prostrations (*sujud*) are specified. The funeral prayer is not mentioned at all, and neither are details of the *adhan* clarified. These are all derived from the *Sunnah*, the practice of the Prophet as codified in the *Hadith* some two centuries after the Prophet's demise.

* ⁷⁴ Martin Lings, *The Qur'anic Art of Calligraphy and Illumination* (London: Scorpion Publishing, 1976), 16. The collection of the Qur'an was completed in the time of the third *khalifa*. The earliest written text of a complete Qur'an dates from the last half of the second century after Muhammad's death, about 815 CE.

⁷⁵ al-Ghazzali, *Inner Dimensions of Islamic Worship*. trans. Mukhtar Holland, (London: Islamic Foundation, 1983).

* ⁷⁶ Ebrahim Moosa, 'Islam.' in John de Gruchy and Martin Prozesky, *Guide*, 214-5.

⁷⁷ J. R. Bowen, 'Salat in Indonesia: The Social meanings of Islamic ritual.' *MAN* ns. 24, (1988), 600-619.

⁷⁸ James Kritzeck & William H Lewis, eds. *Islam in Africa* (New York: Van Nostrand-Rheinhold, 1969), 6.

epochal work she has detailed a plethora of rituals.⁷⁹ She infers that there is a great leaning towards *tasawwuf*, and concludes that 'mysticism pervades Islamic ritual'.⁸⁰

Definition of Ritual

According to the biogenetic structuralist school ritual is a complex phenomenon, which the proponents have defined within both a social, behavioural (psychological) and biological framework :

'Ritual behaviour is as a subset of formalised behaviour that involves two or more individuals in active and reciprocal communication that is structured, stereotyped and repetitive in occurrence over time; and results in greater coordination of conspecifics towards some social action, purpose or goal. The latter refer to the primary biological function of ritual behaviour, which is to facilitate, through the cybernetic flow of information, the synchronisation of individual action into corporate action - action directed towards some environmental challenge that may not be met successfully through individual action.'⁸¹

One of the principal functions of ritual in the past was that of communication. Its secondary role was that of equilibration or adaptation. We shall demonstrate later, that the ultimate role of ritual is for adaptation and survival, and when considered from the perspective of the immune system, ritual operates at the cellular level, and influences the hormonal and defence milieu of the organism. According to the school of D'Aquili et al., 'human ceremonial ritual is not a simple institution unique to man but rather a nexus of variables shared by other species. All component variables have evolutionary precursors or anlagen dating far back in hominid phylogeny and beyond...'⁸² We claim that ritual needs speech, which is symbol formation, leading to cultural patterns ' which is alone the endowment of *Homo sapiens*.

The phenomenology of Islamic Ritual

⁷⁹ Annemarie Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam* (Albany: SUNY, 1994).

⁸⁰ Annemarie Schimmel, 'Aspects of Mystical Thought in Islam' in *The Islamic Impact*. Yvonne Haddad, et al., eds. (Syracuse NY: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1984), 113.

⁸¹ D'Aquili, et al., *Spectrum*, 31, 26, 156.

⁸² D'Aquili, et al., *Spectrum*, 36.

In order to investigate the various approaches to the phenomenology of religious ritual, we found that proposed by Charles Adam to be scientific and independent of theological and philosophical concerns.⁸³ The characteristics of such an approach embody two major elements: that of *epoche* and taxonomy, leading to the search 'for an underlying structure of religious experience'. He defines *epoche* as 'implying a common ground in human personality for religious experience and a fundamental sameness of religious reaction among all men, no matter how separated in time and space and how different in cultural expression'. Adams claims that this approach is of fundamental importance for the study of Islam. It opens the door to the penetration of Islamic religious experience...and the norm in all study of religion is the experience of the believer himself.'⁸⁴

The need for taxonomy

The classifying of phenomena is cardinal to the elucidation of an underlying structure for religious experience. In his delineation of the divisions for the study of ritual in Islam, Graham states that *Sufism* is one category which can be fruitful, yet has been neglected in Islamic studies, despite the fact that there is a 'profound mystical strain that has been present in the community from an early time, perhaps from the era of the Prophet himself'. Charles Adam laments that 'despite its importance, *Sufism* does not yet have a systematic or firm basis in scholarly studies'.⁸⁵ Schubel suggests that since the *Sunni* school has numerical superiority, western scholars regarded it as normative and representative of orthodox Islam, 'whilst *Shi'ism*, and by extension *Sufism*, even though this mystical form has normally flourished within a *Sunni* milieu - is a dangerous heresy which has continually threatened the mainstream of Islamic thought and practice'.⁸⁶

⁸³Charles Adams in Martin (ed.), *Approaches*, 49.

⁸⁴Charles Adams in Martin, (ed.), *Approaches*, 50.

⁸⁵Charles Adams in Martin (ed.), *Approaches*, 52.

⁸⁶ Schubel, *Religious Performance*, 14. Schubel cites 'Orientalist' scholars such as Gibb, Goldziher as well as Fazlur Rahman in his *magnum opus*, entitled *Islam*. Schubel argues that 'this supposes that the intention of God and Muhammad was that the Islamic *ummah* (the community of Muslims) would organise itself along the lines of *Sunnism*...Perhaps the answer can be found in the spirit of Rationalism that permeated scholarship in the late nineteenth

Since Sunnism is regarded as the normative, and both *Shia 'ism* and *Sufism* are emotive expressions, Shubel suggests that 'the scholars favoured those branches of Islam which rejected as irrational and superstitious, the miraculous and mystical dimensions of the religion...for the Orientalists, *Shi 'a* and *Sufi* Islam, both full of miraculous narrative, were seen as intrusions in the pure - if somewhat arid - monotheism of Muhammad as propagated by such groups as the *Wahabis*, the *Ahl al-Hadith* and the *Deobandis*'.⁸⁷

We thus modify Graham's classification to include *all* ritual that Muslims perform, 'whether practised by the scholastics, or *Sufis*, in rural or urban societies, by teachers, or common folk' and thus procure a more inclusive view, which is an essential requirement to holistically, rather than eclectically evaluate ritual in Islam.

Ritual and political reality

Kalim Siddiqui, states that the 'winners rewrite history', and that transformations in Muslim society are not due to religious factors, but historical or political hegemony.⁸⁸ Nasr concurs by citing the executions of three mystics that were due to political factors rather than theological infractions. Piety often is an expression of political power as seen in the difference between *Shi 'a* piety and that of *Sufi*. The former is personal allegiance to the *Ahl al-bayt* (the Prophet's family), whilst to the *Sufi*, personal piety is derived by allegiance to a shaikh or guide. Schimmel prefers the terms *eros*- and *nomos*-orientated expressions, the former representing the *Shi 'ah* and *Sufi* and the latter the *Sunni*.

The pronouncing of the Witness (*Shahadah*) is the most salient ritual of Islam. It determines a life of living in enlightenment, or according to Muslim sages, of achievement, salvation and success as opposed to failure, eternal damnation and

(...continued)

and twentieth centuries, the golden age of Orientalism. 'It is likely that the Orientalists sought out those elements of Islam which mirrored their own predilections'.

⁸⁷ Schubel, *Performance*, 14.

⁸⁸ Kalim Siddiqui, *Stages of Islamic Revolution*. (London: Open Press, 1996), 120. He also states that the '*ulama* are politicians vying for power, both *shi 'a* and *sunni*, and both have been exploited by the politicians in turn. (1996,60). S.H. Nasr. *Three Muslim Sages* (Cambridge Mass: 1963) Long delays occurred in meeting out justice as the theologians could not pronounce culpability on statements made under an altered state of consciousness, using *Shath.*, eg. Hallaj's outcry *Ana al-Haq*. (I am the Reality).

darkness.

Preparatory Ritual of *Wudu*

Before external purification can be performed, the Intention (*niyyah*) is mandatory, and the initial removal of shoes has significance, that of entering sacred space. The incident of the burning Bush in the antecedent Testaments when Moses was commanded to remove his shoes because he was standing on holy ground also occurs in the Qur'an but contrasts in the imperious reply to Moses: 'I am what I am' to 'I am your *Rabb* (Lord). Take off your shoes.' ⁸⁹ Imam Ghazzali expands this to mean: I am the opposite to what you think I am', (based on the paradoxes in the ninety nine Names and regards the shoes as symbolic of the world, which the believer is required to discard outside the mosque before he could present himself to the Almighty).

The first verse in *Sahih Bukhari*, the manual of Authentic Traditions requires that every act of worship has to have the legalistic intentionality (*niyyah*), without which actions do not acquire sacrality. ⁹⁰ The devotee has to silently verbalise or think of his 'intention' of performing a purificatory rite, or the purpose of enacting the ritual.

Purification *Taharah*

The term '*wudu*' lit. 'means to polish, make bright', and in religious sense to purify. In a state of contamination, one may not touch the Qur'an, except by the cover, may not enter the mosque or partake in ritual worship, pilgrimage, recite the Qur'an, or perform the *Ratib*. Contamination of defined categories of bodily action cum behaviour requires decontamination by water or when it may not be available, as in the desert or when one is on a journey, fine sand or topsoil. When sand is used the ritual is shortened. It is termed *tayummum* (lit. massage). Sand is picked up from the ground by slapping the palms down and then applying to the face, and the hands and up the

⁸⁹ Lord does not have the proper signification to the Arabic *Rabb* which implies Creation, Sustenance, and Perfection and ultimate ordering and demise of everything in the universe.

⁹⁰In Chapter 6 we discuss the physiological effect of the sacred word where 'intentionality' is a major component in the response, i.e. of an altered state of consciousness.

elbows. Neither the feet are rubbed, nor is sand taken into the mouth or nostril as is done when water is available. Whether sand or water is used for ablution, a sequential order has to be followed. *Tayammum* has to be performed for each prayer, whilst ablution with water does not require to be repeated if contamination does not occur. The first ablution with water could last for many prayers.⁹¹ *Wudu* is a washing ritual, a circumscription of the boundaries of the body, in order 'to reconsecrate, rededicate the body to obedience of the Creator' and has to be re-enacted after every break in 'purity' (*taharah*) which occurs after the passage of urine, vomitus, stools, flatus or ejaculation of prostatic fluid or sperm. The outer cleansing has to be done even if the body is 'hygienically' spotless.

The rules or prescriptions for *taharah* are mentioned in the Qur'an: (Surah 5:6)

O you who are faithful! When you undertake ritual worship, wash (*faghsilu*) your faces, your hands to the elbows, rub your heads and legs to the ankles. And if you are precluded (from ritual worship, etc) (*junaban*), clean (*fat'taharu*). If you are sick, or on a journey, or one of you come from the privy, or if you have had physical contact with women, and you do not find water, than take (*fatayamamu*) good topsoil, and rub your faces and hands with it. Allah does not want to place a burden on you but He wants to cleanse you and complete his benefaction for you, perhaps you will acknowledge your obligation.

Rheinhardt describes the *tayummum* as a pantomime of the ritual of using water. The *wudu* has immense symbolism, eg the *masa'* of the neck which has to be performed by drawing the dorsal aspects of the hands (palms outward) across the neck, signifies two redemptive elements, one for this world and the other for the Hereafter.

According to the *Hadith* in *Sahih Bukhari*, on the day of Resurrection (*yaum al-Qiyamah*) sinners will be chained for conveyance to the fires of Hell, but the person who has performed the *masa'* in this world ensures that he casts off these chains, and the significance for the mundane world is that he will be freed from the chains of three conditions: from poverty, from subservience (*muhtajiat*) to any human authority

⁹¹ A Kevin Rheinhardt. 'Impurity/No Danger.' in *History of Religions*. Vol. 30, no. 1, 1-24. 1990.

or employer, and ignorance.⁹²

Therefore the Qur'an prescribes the *wudu* which technically is a ritual, because it has intentionality, a structured 'performance' and specific prayers to be recited for each action. In the end, the devotee recites the *tahlil*, the credo. The credo consists of seven words, and upon its utterance, the believer enters into a fortress.⁹³ The sincere believer *mu'min* thus enters into the protection of the sacred, and it is for this reason that in the *Ratib* the *tahlil* is one of the major constituents. The *Hadith* states that at every recital of the Credo faith is refreshed. McClain, an ethnomusicologist, analyses the Credo as a symbolic two phrase sentence with a two syllable four letter word. 'The Name concentrates all the redemptive efficacy of the Divine word'. He maintains that the efficacy of the sacred word is due to its innate rhythmic property, and we show later that it is the harmonic which are the actual triggers for producing physiological effects.

The primacy of the Credo, the Kalima

The *Kalima* is a cardinal ritual, because it involves intentionality, preparation by ritual purification, and a verbal utterance. The phenomenon of spiritual progress through 'stages' *darajah*, pertains to all ritual, but one in particular, described as a *me'raj* (ascent) is achieved by the *salat*, 'which is central to the Muslim's religious repertoire'.⁹⁴ The funeral prayer is called the *janazah salat*. Graham finds parallels in Islamic ritual with *rites de passage*. He classifies birth, circumcision and marriage rites under this heading. Strictly then rites such as completion of the Qur'an should also appear under this heading, as the ablution before prayer is also a change in sacrality.

⁹² It is salient to note that all Knowledge is by grace of Allah. (2:216?) This implies the presence of immense symbolisation in Islamic ritual which the esoterists have propounded. Rheinart omitted to mention this 'insignificant action'. This applies also to the postures of the *Salat* when considered as a *me'raj*, an experiential journey. G. M. Karim, 'The Symbolism of the *Salat*' delivered at the World Assembly of Religions, New York. 1985. See Schimmel's opus on Phenomenology, *Deciphering the Signs of God*. (1994), 139-142.

⁹³ Annemarie Schimmel, *Phenomenology*, (1975), 134.

⁹⁴ John R. Bowen, '*Salat* in Indonesia: The Social Meanings of an Islamic Ritual.' in *MAN* ns. 24, (1988), 600-619.

The various forms of recital of the Qur'an, is the third ritual of significance. Compared to reading of the antecedent scriptures, which is not defined as a 'religious act', the Qur'an itself enjoins its recital 'in measured tones', with the preliminary lustration, and cautions that the act is being 'witnessed' (17:78). Its completion by a child and memorisation *hifz*, ceremonies are perhaps the most eventful in a Muslim's life, since the Qur'an forms the basis of all law, all ritual and ethics. The various forms of recital are private and public, with *qir'at* being public whilst *tilawa* being private, or what Schubel terms 'household' rituals.⁹⁵ The ritual of *wird*, or *wazifah* are repetition of words from the Qur'an, and a composition is called a *ratib*. *Rawatibs* (pl.) are various compositions of Qur'anic verses, *surahs*, and invocations institutionalised in the *Sufi* orders.

Constance Padwick has listed many of these invocations, each having a specific title such as *tahlil*, *tasmiya*, *taslim*, *tasliya*, *istighfar* and *isti'aza*.⁹⁶ Although these are termed as 'household rituals' by Schubel, the *Ratib* is a public ritual. of which there are four principle ones, and a myriad of others termed *hadra* or *saman* at the Cape, which are all private, performed at home, but public in a sense of being shared with neighbours, as was the wont at the Cape, when the performance of Islamic ritual was banned. House *madaris* (schools) were an important feature of early Islam at the Cape.⁹⁷

The four pillars constitute behavioural obligations: *salat* (prayer) *saum*, (fasting), *zakah* (Defined Charity) and *hajj* which is the pilgrimage. Visits to the Prophet's tomb in Medina *ziyarah*, are part of the pilgrimage.

The dramatic rituals are the *Rawatib*, *Zurkhanah*, *Ta'ziyyah* the *hadra* of the whirling dervishes and *Qawwali*, musical concert.⁹⁸ The *Zar* and *Hamadsha*, are a

⁹⁵It is important to note that *Tilawat* the formal reading or recitation of the Qur'an is an act of 'ibadah. The *Qira't* is a stylised cantillation of the Qur'an which is a specific talent of the Reciter, the *Qari'*. Compared to the reading of the bible or attending Church which Cumsty cites as not being 'religious'.

⁹⁶Constance Padwick, *Muslim Devotions* (London: SPCK Press, 1960).

⁹⁷Achmat Davids. 'Alternative Education: Tuan Guru and the formation of the Cape Muslim Community.' in da Costa, *Pages from Cape Muslim History*, 47-56.

⁹⁸*Qawwali* (Ar. *Qawl*: Sacred speech) refers to eulogies, hymns to the Prophet and was most
(continued...)

type of *ratib* used for exorcism.⁹⁹

Of the numerous calendrical celebrations those sanctioned in the Qur'an are the two 'id festivals, marking the end of Ramadan and at the end of *haji*, the festival of sacrifice. There is no official sanction regarding the rites of *milad*, the celebration of the Prophet's birthday and the sacred nights of *me'raj*, the *bar'at* and *al-Qadr*, the night of revelation of the Qur'an. Although the *sunnis* regard the tenth day of *Muharrum* as sacred, it is not commemorated with processions or the building of *tabut*, sarcophagi.¹⁰⁰

The scholastics have prescribed the minimal requirements, of which only the five pillars are obligatory, the Sunnis have only the three calendrical festivals and sometimes a *milad*. Tayob classifies some Islamic ritual as 'folk practices' such as the *maulid*, 'which consisted of music, lectures, and poems dedicated to the Prophet, often performed in a festive like atmosphere' which Schimmel states is an 'indicator' of the presence of *tasawwuf*.¹⁰¹

Lawson and McCauley observed that 'a ritual is central to a religion if it plays a constitutive role in the preservation of that system'.¹⁰² When the *Ratib* is examined in this parameter, we find that it was a 'core ritual' during the period of the prohibition of Islam at the Cape, since it fostered devotionism during difficult times, sustained the nascent community and provided a resource for empowerment. Lawson and McCauley claim that if a ritual is deleted, altered or added, then, if it is a central ritual, it will lead to a fundamental rupture of the identity of the religious system.¹⁰³ We propose that the condition does not apply to the *Ratib*, even though there is

(...continued)

highly developed in the Indo-Pakistan continent. The *Chistiyya* introduced music in their *sama* in order to compete in conversion. Muslims prefer the term 'reversion' since every human is born a Muslim, and acts as a Hindu, Christian, or Jew according to his environment.

⁹⁹ This is strictly a healing ritual, for possession, and practised in north Africa. Its recitals can be classified as a type of *ratib*.

¹⁰⁰ Graham, *Mirror*, 62.

¹⁰¹ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 215-7.

¹⁰² Lawson and McCauley, *Rethinking Religion*, 127.

¹⁰³ Lawson and McCauley, *Rethinking Religion*, 127.

considerable mobility in both the execution (enactment) and the verbal (textual) aspects of the *Ratib*, which continues to thrive at the Cape and is spreading northwards into Natal and Transvaal. Participants perform rituals in order to bring about changes in their religious world, as well as socially as seen in the *Ratib*. This could be very germane to the discourse that although the scholastics have declared the *Ratib* to be a *bid'ah*, an innovation, and beyond the requirements of the *Shar'iah*, the *rawatib* satisfy 'a need of man' since man is *Homo religiosus*, which legalism and ritualism cannot fulfill in both the intellectual and the emotive dimensions as well as its instrumental value in generating solace and tranquillity as the Qur'anic verse challenges: 'Does the remembrance of Allah not induce tranquillity in the hearts' ? (13:28)

The term *dhikr* in its legalistic *fiqhi* development does not imply the rituals of *Dhikr* that the *Sufis* emphasize. In the Qur'anic sense it includes the formal prayers as well as its recitation, and indeed any thought or action which makes one think of Allah (intention). This includes charity, as expressed in the view that a kind word or a smile enjoys equivalence to a helping hand in merit *thawab*. Islamic doxology singularly has the most effective means of entering 'alternate reality'. Concerning the *dhikr*, most of the writers have often conflated ritual with the recitation. Michael Gilsenan has erred when he titles a Chapter in his book as the 'Ritual of the *Dhikr*'. This is rather a recital of a *dhikr* than a ritual of the mystical orders in Egypt.¹⁰⁴

Dan Sperber has argued for over a decade that traditional semiotics is a 'walking ghost', giving Levi-Strauss primary credit for the demise of semiotics. Sperber argued against the view that by 'cracking a code one could ascertain meanings,...the conceptual system of a religion, often endows ritual acts with quite peculiar causal features. Ritual acts invoke causal processes, not all of which we recognise in the world of sense experience'¹⁰⁵ We concur entirely and advance this proposition in chapter six.

Religious Experience, Expression and Altered States:

Dilthey defined experience as that moment of 'reality which only exists for us

¹⁰⁴ Michael Gilsenan, *Saints and Sufi in Modern Egypt*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 157. He states that 'the central ritual of the *Sufi* Orders is the *dhikr*'.

¹⁰⁵ Gilsenan, *Saints*, 160.

in the facts of consciousness given by inner experience', and the 'anthropology of experience deals with how individuals actually experience their culture,...how events are received by consciousness.'¹⁰⁶ Whilst behaviour is an expression which is only accessible to an outside observer, experience is 'self-referential', which has to be communicated to others.

Experiences are expressed in behaviour of varied forms ranging from narratives, literary works, theatre, carnival, and ritual activity covering every field of human activity.¹⁰⁷ Thus, the anthropology of experience deals more with the subjects, interviewing them on their experiences, rather than observations by an outsider making his own conclusions.

We thus employ interviews and discussions with the subjects in order to elucidate the meaning of their expression. Since we are dealing with mystical rituals, the nexus between expression, experience, and the interpretation of the altered states of consciousness become cardinal to our elucidating the meaning of the *Ratib*. The textual elements of the *Ratib* are from the Qur'an. The aural nature of the recital constitutes sounds, and it is mainly the rhythm and percussion which have a physiological effect, as elucidated by Needham.¹⁰⁸ Gilbert Rouget is unjustifiably critical of Neher's findings on the physiological effects of drums and proposes an alternate hypothesis for the trance.¹⁰⁹ However, the study of the human nervous system which is the most complex system in the universe poses a problem in that no 'simplistic model could ever explain its nature' and function, and there is 'a vast gulf between experience and understanding' of it'.¹¹⁰

Almost a century ago, in a seminal work, William James distinguished

¹⁰⁶ Edward Bruner, 'Introduction' in Victor Turner and Edward Bruner, eds. *The Anthropology of Experience* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1986), 4.

¹⁰⁷ Bruner, *Anthropology*, 5.

¹⁰⁸ Rodney Needham, 'Percussion and Transition' in *Man*, ns. 2, (1967), 606-14. See also his earlier article 'A physiological explanation of unusual behaviour in ceremonies involving drums' in *Human Biology* 4, (1962), 151-60.

¹⁰⁹ Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance*, xviii. Andrew Neher, 'A physiological explanation of unusual behaviour in ceremonies involving drums.' *Human Biology*, Vol. 4, (1962), 151-60.

¹¹⁰ C. D. Laughlin, *Brain, Symbol and Experience*, xii.

between religion as 'experience' or as 'belief', employing the terminology of 'first hand' and 'second hand' respectively. Religion as 'received', constitutes the ritualistic and scriptural forms as 'second hand' whilst the many types of 'experience', such as trances, visions, possession, dreams, divination and revelation would be 'first hand'.¹¹¹ We would classify all these 'religious experiences' as 'mystical', realising that all these terms are 'open-ended'.

Steven Katz remarked that 'mystics do not say what they mean and do not mean what they say' is a founding statement on mystical expression.¹¹² Stephen Phillips defines a mystical experience as 'a psychological event of indefinite duration that the mystic herself takes to be a direct awareness of such 'spiritual objects' as God, Brahman or Emptiness, or of a 'spiritual realm' that is not a matter of people's everyday acquaintance'.¹¹³ William Alston terms as 'mystical' any experience that is taken by the subject to be a direct awareness of (what is taken to be) Ultimate Reality or (what is taken to be) an object of religious worship'.¹¹⁴ Katz comments that language has been undervalued by analysts in the study of mysticism'. This is very germane to our study of the *dhikr* and *mantra* and their theurgic, healing and physiological effects.¹¹⁵ There are four problems in deciphering mystical language, that of texts and experience, varied genres, such as prayers, song, poetry, aphorisms, didactic compositions, contextualisation, transformational and power aspects, i.e. altering the state of awareness or consciousness. The late Victor Turner observed in the 1970s that anthropology was 'withering on the structuralist vine' because it did not take into account 'experience'.¹¹⁶ This points to the discipline of psychology and shows the need

¹¹¹ The categories of Revelation in Islam commence with the highest *Wahy*, going through stages, intuition, inspiration, with dreams being the most inferior form.

¹¹² Steven Katz, 'Mystical Speech and Mystical Meaning' in Steven Katz ed., *Mysticism and Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3.

¹¹³ Stephen H. Phillips, 'Mystic Analogising and the Peculiarly Mystical.' in Steven Katz, ed., *Mysticism and Language*, 123.

¹¹⁴ William P Alston, 'Literal and Non-literal in Reports of Mystical Experience.' in Steven Katz, *Mysticism and Language*, 80.

¹¹⁵ Steven Katz, *Mysticism and Language*, 24.

¹¹⁶ Turner and Bruner, eds., *The Anthropology of Experience*, 3.

for a multidisciplinary approach. As Fernandez pointed out, experience comes not only verbally, but also in 'images and impressions'.¹¹⁷ These modes are evident in the three traditions that are under investigation, which form the metathesis for our claim towards a new perspective on trance rituals. Thus, ala Geertz, we can assert that the focus of our study, on the religious experience as a trance is not on its locus, but rather on its roots.

The definition of trance

Weston La Barre defines trance as deriving '...from Latin *transitus*, 'a passage, ' in turn from *transire* to go over, namely to go over into another psychic state, to swoon half-dead, to undergo rapture (being taken away) or ecstasy (the soul's standing outside the body), but in medicine, trance is still used to designate a cataleptic or hypnotic state of partial consciousness and high suggestibility'.¹¹⁸ Drawing upon Goodman, Bourguignon and Barbara Lex, Judith Tobler also observes that trance states are a 'homoversal' normal physiological reaction.¹¹⁹ The inculcation of a trance state, however, has a 'sacred' basis, with different 'techniques' being utilised in the disparate cultures. Gilbert Rouget holds that trance is associated with 'two aspects of religion, shamanism and possession states...but the relation between music and shamanic trance and music and possession' are very much different. In the former it is a journey, which man undertakes to the invisible world, whilst in the latter it is the opposite. It is the inhabitants of the invisible world who visit man'.¹²⁰ His views need revision in the light of contemporary knowledge.

The prosaic, outmoded and imprecise term of 'trance' has been displaced by recent studies, notably by Charles Tart, Orenstein and others. Tart defines a trance as a 'state of consciousness, a pattern, an organisational style of one's overall mental functioning at any given time.' Robert Orenstein claims that psychology is primarily the study of consciousness rather than that of behaviour, thus trance is a form of

¹¹⁷ Turner and Bruner, *The Anthropology of Experience*, 4.

¹¹⁸R. K. Siegel & L.J. West, eds., *Hallucinations* (New York: John Wiley, 1979), 9-10.

¹¹⁹Judy Tobler, *Feminine Principles: Women's Practices; A Comparative Study of Ecstatic States in Zulu Tradition and Hinduism in Natal*. Honours Thesis. University of Cape Town. December 1993.

¹²⁰Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance*, 19.

behaviour during a certain state of consciousness.¹²¹ Each state of consciousness constitutes a 'paradigm for dealing with reality' and is very similar to that of Thomas Kuhn, that 'science functions under control of paradigms'.¹²² It is no longer debatable that easterners function at polyphasic levels of consciousness, whilst westerners have only recently 'discovered' this technique.¹²³

In chapter six we shall be analysing the previous hypotheses on the altered states of consciousness induced by ritual which modify experience. The most recent hypothesis is that of Laughlin, McManus and D'Aquili. Their explication of the experience of the altered state of Consciousness is that it is due to 'warps'. They equate 'warps' with Turner's 'liminal' event. A warp 'metaphorically implies a threshold through which the stream of consciousness must pass when it 'leaves' one phase behind and 'enters' another.¹²⁴ This is precisely the significance of '*die bank*' in the *Ratib* which is described as a 'doorway', *darwazah* to an alternate reality. Laughlin et al., assert that 'ritual is used in many societies to manipulate perception of phase attributes, thereby transforming the operating structures mediating phases of consciousness. Such manipulation makes new experiences possible'.¹²⁵

Our hermeneutic analysis of trance rituals in the three cultures points to a biological isomorphism. Besides specialised structures being essential, quite complex physiological and biochemical alterations have to occur in the internal milieu of the individual. The historical origin of the ability to alter states of consciousness through rituals such as the *Ratib* will be surveyed in the following chapter.

¹²¹Robert Orenstein, 'The Nature of Human Consciousness' in Charles T. Tart, ed. *Transpersonal Psychology* (New York: Routledge, 1973), xi.

¹²²Charles T. Tart, *Transpersonal Psychology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 13 and 16. He lists a wide variety of assumptions under which western orthodox psychology suffers. Orenstein has done pioneering work on consciousness.

¹²³Laughlin et al., *Brain, Symbol and Experience*, 82.

¹²⁴ Laughlin et al., *Brain, Symbol and Experience*, 142-145.

¹²⁵We elucidate the symbols and metaphors of the various sacraments of the ritual in Chapter four, analysis of the *Ratib*.

General Anthropology will in the end have to merge with Biology.
Walter Burkert¹

Trance rituals, once regarded as 'esoteric anthropologica' following Eliade's definitive study are now being sedulously pursued under diverse approaches. The religious life of the ancients centred around the shaman, 'at once magician and medicine-man, miracle worker, priest, mystic and poet'. Shaman is a Tungus word from central Asia, and accepted in anthropological literature to denote a magician-priest, diviner, and healer. The shaman was a highly venerated and feared person because he could transcend the normal world and enter the 'Other'. Since the ability to induce trances through ritual have been observed from the earliest of times, an evolutionary approach is essential in order to elucidate its unique status.

Evolutionary Elements in Trance States:

Richard Klein suggests that the Southern African fossil record reveals: 'that the appearance of the modern physical form preceded the appearance of fully modern behaviour.'² This view calls for a distinction between 'archaic' (*Homo erectus*) and 'modern' hominids (*Homo sapiens*) in that the latter have art and language speciation, whilst the former do not. A major difference is the flexed basicranium compared to the relatively flat one found in the earlier hominids.³ The San were unique in many other respects besides being the 'dwindling minority of the world's population' as described by

¹Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred*, xii.

² Richard G. Klein. 'Biological and Behavioural perspectives on Modern Human Origins in Southern Africa.' Paul Mellars & Chris Stringer (eds) *The Human Revolution* (Edinburgh: E.U.P. 1989), 543.

³Robert Foley 'The Ecological conditions of Speciation: A comparative Approach to the Origins of Anatomically-Modern Humans.' Mellars and Stringer eds., (Edinburgh: E.U.P., *The Human Revolution*, 1989), 330. The highly specialised ability for the performance of language (which requires a larger brain size, as well as Broca's Area (which results in the concave base of the skull, *Homo erectus* has a less flexible curve), together with a larger cerebrum for symbolic activity, with a larger mandible, and the ability of art, distinguishes the behaviour of the two species of hominids. See also Phillip Lieberman 'The Origins of Some aspects of Human Language and Cognition.' Mellars and Stringer, *Human Revolution*, 391-414. Lieberman states that the *Homo erectus* may be deficient in such cognitive tasks as rule-governed logic.

Richard B. Lee and I DeVore in *Man the Hunter* (1968). Tobias states that 'our inferences about pre-historic man are likely to be more valid if they are based not only on what can be learned by digging up the past, but also about what is known about living hunter-gatherers', which we understand to mean, their rituals.⁴ Bleek's study reveals that the *Khoi* language seemed to represent the earliest of the 'sex denoting' languages of Africa, Europe and Asia.⁵ Lee has shown that trance rituals played a major role in the social life of the Bushman. Trance performances were held at the least opportunity from rainmaking, healing, and divination to celebration of hunting, wedding and joyous feasts, i.e. from the sacred to mundane.⁶ Germane to our study of Trance rituals amongst the Khoisan, is their ability for symbolisation as depicted in rock art, and their performance of trance rituals, an act which is exclusive to *Homo sapiens*.⁷ It reveals that they were much more sophisticated in the evolutionary scale than described. Tobias states that *Homo habilis* whilst having the anatomical structure, both cerebral and vocal, was only capable of 'rudimentary speech', and that it is speech which is vitally necessary for the transmission of culture.⁸

Alan Mann claims that there are no identifiable characteristics, either behavioural or anatomical, distinguishing man from the non-human primates, and suggests that alternate criteria must be sought.⁹ However in his parameters he has overlooked the most significant: the consideration of speech, with the 'descent of the

⁴P.V. Tobias, 'The San: An Evolutionary Perspective.' in P.V. Tobias, (ed) *The Bushmen: San Hunters and Herders of South Africa* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1978), 18.

⁵Willem Hendrik Bleek, *Reynard the Fox in South Africa* (London: Trubner. 1964).

⁶R. B. Lee. 'The Sociology of !Kung Bushman Trance Performances'. in *Trance and Possession States* Raymond Prince, ed., (Montreal: R.M. Bucke, 1968), 35-54.

⁷Barbara Lex cites reports of Chimpanzees being capable of performing repeated activity, i.e. ritual which enables them to enter in a similar physiologic state. Humans alone can do so at will, for a 'religious' purpose, because of symbolic cognition and a peculiar neuro-immunological structure.

⁸Phillip V. Tobias. 'Recent Advances in the Evolution of the Hominids with special reference to Brain and Speech'. *Scripta Varia*. Pontifical Academy of Sciences. Vol. 50: 85-140. May 1983.

⁹Alan Mann. 'Hominid and Cultural Origins' in *MAN*. 7, no. 3. (Sept 1972): 379-386.

larynx' which does not appear in fossil form as it is not a bony structure. He admits that 'behavioural patterns' cannot be elicited through fossils. He cites Dobzhansky as stating that 'a long learning period would be disadvantageous to any animal, unless it was required for the transmission across generations of behaviour offering an 'off-setting' advantage. The advantage we maintain, is the acquisition of speech, which is so complex due to symbol formation, that it takes, on average, two years to develop.¹⁰ It would also explain that of all the animals, it is only humans who require the longest paediatric care.¹¹ It is only *Homo sapiens*, who possess the complex process of speech.¹² Speech requires symbolic cognition, for the enactment of ritual which is a feature of being human, *Homo religiosus*.¹³ It is only *Homo religiosus* who can voluntarily induce a trance state.¹⁴ This conforms with Thomas Luckmann's succinct definition of religion as 'anything that allows humans to rise or go beyond the purely biological functioning of their physical organisms', and elaborates that 'religion is that

¹⁰It is striking that the Qur'an prescribes a two year weaning period. (2:233.)

¹¹Fish swim almost immediately after birth, whilst quadruped animals start walking just after birth. The coordination of four legs is a more complicated process than that of bipedals. This poses a problem for the evolutionists who classify organisms as primitive 'evolving' into higher ones. Every species is perfectly endowed to cope with its environment. John Davidson *Natural Creation or Natural Selection*. (London: Element Books, 1992), 18.

* ¹²Ebrahim Moosa. 'The legal philosophy of al-Ghazzali: Law, Language and Theology in *al Mustasfa*'. PhD Thesis, UCT, 1995. He elucidates that the origin of language is seen 'as being virtually providentially determined'. The Qur'an refers to the Creation of primordial man being 'taught' the 'names' which refers to language. (2:31) The word '*bayan*' refers to 'comprehension' in *Suratul Rahman*, also an aspect of a semiotic process. (55:4).

¹³Phillip V. Tobias. 'Recent Advances in the Evolution of the Hominids with special reference to Brain and Speech'. Proceedings of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. (Rome: May 1983): 85-140. He cites Father J Franklin Ewing's comment that 'currently more and more theologians are showing themselves favourable to (evolution)'. However the sudden 'leap' by an extra 1% of genes causing a huge increase in size of the cerebral cortex, as well as the salient appearance of 'speech' with the consequent appearance of culture, supports rather the Creationist view.

¹⁴This would accord with the Creationist view depicted in the Quran which is quite specific that *Homo religiosus* is a distinct creation endowed with speech. (*bayan*) in 55:4, and that apes are a degraded, lower creation, called man-apes, 2:65, also 7:166. The Qur'an presents no problem with 'horizontal' evolution, where one specie does not 'evolve' into another.

activity which makes human beings human.'¹⁵ This activity is primarily speech which is utilised in ritual. The Khoisan then could not be said to be primitive in any sense, since their rituals were more sophisticated and not less efficacious than occurring in any contemporary religion.¹⁶ These rituals were 'homeostatic' (adaptive) which probably resulted in the Khoisan aging less, without the usual rise in blood pressure with advancing years as evinced in the rest of the world.¹⁷

Following upon the biogenetic structuralist school of D'Aquili et al, by trance, we mean any manifestation of an altered state of consciousness, whether religious or secular. By the inclusion of the Khoisan we wish to show that, although they did not have any literate form of the sacred, other mediators or stimuli were present, such as rhythmic dance, heavy breathing, stomping, percussion instruments, foot castanets, and drums, sufficient enough to evoke a physiological reaction, to cause an alteration of consciousness.

The Khoisan - History under colonisation

Three and half centuries ago, white colonialists arrived at the Cape, which had serious repercussions for the indigenous peoples, particularly the San. An English Government Report of 1836 records the brutality of the 'civilised' invaders:

'In 1774, an order was issued for the extirpation of the whole of the Bushmen, and three commandos, or military expeditions, were sent out to execute it. The massacre at that time was horrible, and the system of persecution continued unremitting, so that....it came to be considered a meritorious act to shoot a Bushman.'¹⁸

Jeffreys, in a moving epitaph to the Bushmen grieves that they were 'hunted down like wild beasts' and that 'nowhere has 'man's inhumanity to man' been more vilely displayed

¹⁵David Chidester. 'Primal Religions' in *A Southern African Guide to World Religions*. (Cape Town. David Phillip. 1991):15.

¹⁶ With the exception of Islam, where we suggest below that the Muslims have the most sophisticated 'structured' rituals for homeostasis.

¹⁷R. B. Lee. Cited in P.V.Tobias, *The Bushman*, 27.

¹⁸ J. D. Lewis-Williams T.A. Dowson. *Images of Power: Understanding Bushman Rock Art* (Johannesburg: Southern Books, 1989), 69.

than in Bushmanland against these misunderstood people, who were friendly and peaceful and did not believe in violence unless provoked,...and that nowhere else in the world has such widespread, indomitable courage per square kilometre of territory been displayed'.¹⁹ Smallpox was also a catastrophic factor leading to the virtual extinction of the Bushman.²⁰

Templin comments that the Afrikaners developed an 'exclusiveness based on religious, cultural and racial' considerations in their relations with the Khoikhoi and the San. There was a progressive change in attitude resulting from a perceived 'lack of culture' as the Khoisan had some 'odious' rituals.²¹ Later colour differences, and the condescending assumption of this provided the basis of the whole policy of *apartheid* which was officially entrenched and executed in law two centuries later under the theological philosophy of Hendrik Verwoerd.²² MacCrone observed that the frontier farmer 'justified his right to dominate the heathen because of his religion, 'a jealously guarded group-privilege'. The heathen could 'never compete with the Christian, and therefore were not equal before the law, and neither property or criminal offences against the heathen could be treated equally'.²³

Religion of the Khoisan

From their first contact with the indigenous pastoralists, the Khoikhoi (human humans), as distinct from the San, 'hunter-gatherers', European observers claimed that the Khoisan did not have a religion at all. It was only after the 18th Century that a better understanding of their way of life led to some identification of the sacred

¹⁹M.D. W. Jefferys, 'An Epitaph to the Bushman' in P.V. Tobias, *The Bushman*, 88.

²⁰Elphick and Giliomee, eds. *Shaping of South Africa* Rev. ed. (Cape Town: Maskew Miller, 1993), 4.

²¹The colonisers could not accommodate the custom of the Khoisan of urinating on a person in order to honour him.

²²J. Alton Templin, *Ideology on a Frontier: The Theological Foundation of Afrikaner Nationalism*. (London: Greenwood Press, 1984), 39.

²³MacCrone contrasting the discriminatory situation at the Cape and that prevailing in Natal states that at the Cape it was more a religious *apartheid*, whereas in Natal it was blatantly racial, primarily directed against the Indians. I. D. MacCrone, *Race Attitudes in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1937), 256.

elements in their culture. Katz comments that 'religion as a separate enterprise does not exist for the Kung, and what in the West is called 'sacred' or 'profane', or the 'ordinary' and the 'extraordinary' are merged in Kung life'.²⁴ We show that this view needs qualification. However, the existence of a 'high god', the creator and benefactor of human beings; and a destructive lesser god who stands in opposition to the high god', the presence of a trickster figure points to elements comprising a coherent religious system in spite of regional diversity. Hoff maintains that the Khoikhoi believe that the entire universe is permeated by an impersonal supernatural power'.²⁵ However, Mathias Guenther argued that 'we must regard Khoisan religion as deeply and pervasively ambiguous and heterogenous, fluid and lacking in standardisation.' This was primarily due to the Khoisan being nomadic, and because of the oral transmission of their belief-structure it is bound to suffer a 'wide range' of inconsistencies, and bound to change with changing environments.²⁶

The Kungs' primary expression of 'religion', 'cosmology' and 'medicine' is expressed in the trance dance. Richard Lee observes in his foreword to this work that the Dance is 'the main focus of their religious life'.²⁷ As they were pre-literate societies, no religious text exists, 'information about their gods is neither consistent nor codified.' The deities therefore vary in nomenclature. Peter Carstens elicited the changes in Khoikhoi belief due to colonisation, where the High God was *Tsui-//goab*, who is opposed by a male figure *//Guanab*, who is personified evil, the source of war, sickness and death, and sorcery. This corresponds to ancient Babylonian beliefs attributing illness to anger of the various gods. A third, mediating ancestral hero entity is *Heitsi-*

²⁴ I. D. MacCrone, *Race Attitudes in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1937), 29.

²⁵ Ansie Hoff, 'Die Traditionele Wêreldbeskouing van die Khoekhoen,' in *The South African Journal of Ethnology*, 1993. Vol. 16, no.1 (1993): 109.

²⁶ Guenther Mathias, 'The relation of Bushman Art to Ritual and Folklore' in Thomas A. Dowson and David Lewis-Williamson, eds. *Contested Images*, (Johannesburg: W.U.P., 1994), 268.

²⁷ Richard Katz, *Boiling Energy: Community Healing among the Kalahari Kung* (London: Harvard University Press. 1982), viii.

Eibib.²⁸ Richard Katz in a definitive work on Bushman healing, remarks that 'cultural man has been on earth for two million years, of which 99% of this period has been spent as a hunter-gathering lifestyle,...and that the Kung approach to healing and consciousness is rooted in their environment and culture'.²⁹ Contemporary research has changed the negative perception of the Khoisan as being savage, heathen, marauders and thieves, by the presence of : an oral tradition of narratives, and of cosmology. Recognition of the cultural variation of different groups amongst them; the presence of ubiquitous rituals, particularly trance dances; and the discovery of their rock art, are components revealing a sophistication and a most successful adaptation with the environment in South Africa.³⁰ When compared to the failure of white equilibration to stresses of life, the Khoisan enjoyed a better life.³¹

Khoisan Trance Rituals

There are several Trance Rituals, differing in time and manner of execution. The principal rituals are for healing such as the Giraffe or *Dwa* dance. This dance takes place at least four times a month, starting at night. The women sit around a fire, singing and clapping rhythmically. The men, sometimes accompanied by women, dance around the singers. As *n/um* is experienced, a sensation of heat starting from the abdomen spreading to the base of the spine, *kia*, the experience of an enhancement of consciousness begins. During this experience they are able to heal by 'pulling' or touching the patient and withdrawing his ailment. What is significant to our study, is the observation by Katz: 'Those at the dance find it exciting, joyful, powerful, being at a

²⁸Peter Carstens, 'Some implications of Change in Khoikhoi Supernatural Beliefs.' in Michael G. Whisson and Martin West, eds., *Religion and Social Change in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Phillip, 1975): 78-95.

²⁹Richard Katz, *Boiling Energy:Community Healing among the Kalahari Kung* (London: Harvard University Press, 1982), 13.

³⁰ David Chidester, et al. eds., *African Traditional Religions in South Africa:An annotated Bibliography* (Westport. Conn: Greenwood Press, 1997), 68-143.

³¹In the 1980's South African whites displayed the world's highest incidence of family slayings and suicide, being faced with compulsory military duties on the Angolan battlefield and with economic problems due to international sanctions, were unable to cope with stress.

dance makes their hearts happy.³² Healing is not reserved for any specific person, and by the time the Kung reach adulthood, over half of the men and 10% of the women can heal. The dance ends at dawn, as 'doing the *kia* when the sun is shining' is considered to be dangerous to life. This empirical observation does have some validity, as sunlight does have an effect on the hormonal balances affected by Circadian rhythms.

The drum Dance is second in importance, as it is performed mainly by females, who sing and dance to experience the *kia*. A single man plays the drum and may also experience it. 'The experience of *kia* is quite similar to that of the Giraffe dance, and healing is confined to the participating group, as contrasted to the giraffe dance, where the whole camp can be affected. The drum dance is local, infrequent, has less emphasis on healing, and compared to the giraffe dance which is open to the entire community, affects the community, whilst the drum dance is confined to female participants and is a menarcheal or marriage rite. They have preparatory or purifactory preconditions for performing the Drum dance. They are washed and adorned with ochre and fat is rubbed on them. They wear beads around their necks, waists and feet, with new soft-skin clothing. They can only eat foods ritually prepared with a cleansing agent. These preparations are necessary for the transition into *n/um* (or healing energy), menarche or marriage.³³ Lewis Williams states that the drum dance is a school where initiates receive training to become shamans.³⁴

Taboo foods include fresh meat of all animals, both male and female, as well as fresh mongongo nuts, and *sha* roots. It is best to avoid introduced foods like milk, bread, eggs, meal, tea and fish. Honey too is felt to interfere with the student's 'learning to 'do *n/um*'. When these foods are eaten for the first time after the training for *n/um* has begun, they must be eaten with a bite of *gwa*, a psychoactive plant, during a special ceremony. It is evident that the dietary rules are akin to fasting which also induces a

³² Katz, *Boiling Energy*, 35.

³³ Katz, *Boiling Energy*, 171.

³⁴ D. Lewis-Williams and T. A. Dowson, eds. *Images of Power* (Johannesburg: Southern Books, 1989), 47.

trance state.³⁵

Gender variations can be observed in the Drum dance. A woman's biological cycles vary, during her child bearing years her *n/um* is activated less frequently, and during pregnancy her '*n/um* arrows' may be taken away from her by her teacher because they are considered dangerous to her unborn baby.³⁶ Women concentrate better in the *n/um* if childbearing is over, and elder females achieve the same height of power as males. This observation has medical validity according to the biochemical hypothesis of this work.

Whereas in the Giraffe dance both male and females participate, the Drum dance is confined to females. The Drum is gaining in popularity as Katz found in 1976 and proposes that this is a transition to sedentism, as a reaction to changed economic circumstances. 'The drum dance could also be seen as a possible strategy for coping with new social alignments'.³⁷ Katz proposes that 'the Drum dance may be seen as a subtheme which provides an important element in the ongoing dynamic of male-female relations...offering an arena for reproductively active women to participate in a spiritual ritual without endangering their child bearing function from the Kung point of view, that is, to *kia* without healing'.³⁸ A surprising correspondence to this proscription is also evident in a recent publication on Trance Dance which is in a popular, secular genre.³⁹ Socially there is gender equality amongst the Khoisan, which Katz terms 'sexual egalitarianism'.

³⁵W. C. Bushell, 'Psychophysiological and Cross-Cultural Dimensions of Ascetico-Meditational Practices: Special Reference to Christian Hermits of Ethiopia'. Ph.D Dissertation, University of Columbia, 1995b.

³⁶An arrow refers to the snapping of the fingers on different parts of the body, after rubbing the body down with the teacher's sweat. It is said to induce *n/um*, an altered state of consciousness.

³⁷Richard Katz, *Boiling*, 72

³⁸Richard Katz, *Boiling*, 174.

³⁹Frank Natale, *Trance Dance: The Dance of Life* (London: Element Books, 1995), 43. Also offered with this book is a CD called *Shaman's Breathe* which contains 9 tracks of musical compositions to induce a trance. Band: Professor Trance and the Energizers. New York: 1995. Island Inc. Records. 825 8th Ave. New York. 10019.

'The giraffe dance is a paradigm or mirror of sexual relationships within the Kung culture...the relative leverages of men and women in the dance appear as equal but different...their interaction with each other is crucial, neither can exist without the other. The role of men is flamboyant, parallelling their role as hunters in bringing home the coveted but chancy meat. The women in performing the music, play the complementary sustaining role, just as they do in their provision of vegetable food.'⁴⁰

The giraffe dance is primarily performed for healing, in the other dances *kia* is not transformed into healing energy. It is performed in a circle, around a central fire, while the Drum dance is along a horseshoe track.

The Tree Dance differs markedly from the previous dances, in that it is more a 'theatrical' presentation than a personal or group ritual. The group of performers are led by one man, Tikay, who having spent some years on the Witwatersrand, has created the show and introduced verbal and gestural elements in the display, borrowed from both the neighbouring pastoralists and from his personal sojourn on the goldmines, where he probably participated in the Sunday performances. He has a troupe of fifteen female dancers, varying in age from the mid-teens to the eldest in her mid-sixties. They provide the chorus of singing, clapping and dancing as an interlude to his accessing the trance state.

It is performed within an enclosure similar to a cattle coral, with a chute at the opening. The structure, constructed from simple branches lashed together, is six feet high and has no roof. It is about twenty feet long, fifteen feet at the widest end, and six feet at the narrowest end which has a gate through which Tikay leads his troupe in and out. The troupe shuffles in double file, with the tallest at the front, and arranged in descending scale. Their shuffling, as tall erect, tightly formed lines, is symbolic of a glade of trees, hence the name. Tikay states that he herds the troupe like cattle, in and out of the enclosure, singing in *Fanakalo*, a creolised language consisting of Zulu, English, Shangaan and Afrikaans words. He relates his experiences on the mine, so rapidly, that the words are almost an indistinguishable wailing. At each songburst, when

⁴⁰Richard Katz, *Boiling Energy*, 175.

he pauses for breath, the chorus emits 'Ya ga da', with much clapping.

As the dance continues, the verbal element decreases in volume and content, but the rhythm increases, becomes more focussed and intense, the group becomes attuned to the dance, they no longer comply with formal positions, 'and the dance becomes organic and spontaneous'. This is a critical moment, as the leader, sweating profusely, writhes on the ground like a snake, shouts joyfully and grimaces in pain, and sometimes enters *kia*. Different 'techniques' like heavy breathing, monotonous drone or beat, with singing and clapping by the women, put him into *kia*. When he falls during *kia*, his female assistants hold him and lower him gently to the ground. Again we have a remarkable corresponding injunction in Natale's book on Trance Dances, which do not mention Khoisan trances at all, unless 'indigenous African' refers to them, because most of the trances described can be directly related to any of the three Kung dances.⁴¹

Tikay attributes his power as being derived from a bird and a snake; the kite, which he imitates by flapping his arms, and the puff adder by slithering on the ground to induce *kia*. He claims that his power to 'pull' (out illness), and the protection from illness is due to the veneration he accords these two species in his dance.

The Choma and Eland dances are meant for male and female initiation, and are accompanied by music. Katz observes that the Kung play music for themselves and not for an audience. These dances are infrequent, and held perhaps every five years or so. In them *kia* is also induced.

The sacraments are sparse, since Kung dress is scanty, normal everyday wear, consisting of skins tied around the waist going between the legs for men, or just a skirt sufficing for females, as considerable sweating occurs during the dance. This sweat is often massaged onto a sick person, rubbed in with animal fat, an act termed 'pulling' the illness (out). The men wear a headband, or a hat, or a feather stuck into the headband, or a dried gourd. Dance rattles are *Zhorosi*, made from dried cocoons with pieces of ostrich egg shells inside, strung on pieces of fibre, are tied around the calves.

⁴¹In the Dance of the Women, the women choose their male partners, and lie with them under a blanket around the camp fire. This is not evident in the Bushman at all, since whenever genitalia are exposed during a trance the spectators hasten to cover them, i.e. the Bushman dances are not for licentiousness, and this is what adversely rebounds on Natale's book as just promoting another conspicious cult. Natale, *Trance Dance*, 83.

As the dancers move around the circle, the rattles impart a staccato sound which 'accents the rhythmic texture of the dance'.

For curing dances, certain plants, *gwa* specifically, are believed to contain *n/um*, and are ground to a powder and mixed with fat, and placed in an empty tortoise shell, into which a burning ember is placed with produces a slow and acrid smoke spiral. This is then wafted over the sick, as it carries *n/um*. This provides a clue, that hallucinogenic substances from plants were known and used as incense.

A short walking stick with a knob at one end is carried by the dancers, to maintain and accent the rhythm, or to support them when they tire, for some dances continue till dawn.

As in all sacred rituals, taboos and preconditions prevail. In the Giraffe dance anyone can join at any stage of the dance, whilst for the other dances, for women or girls certain preparations are required. The size of the group can range from four to two hundred persons, sometimes, people journey from afar to take part in the ritual. This necessitates two or more fires for such a large group which can occur if a large eland has been caught. The dance then is done in a figure of eight pattern, maintaining continuity and linking the two groups.

Initiation as a prelude to the dance

Initiation is associated with all trance rituals obtaining in the *Ratib* and *Kavadi* as well. 'A man wishing to become a shaman had to plunge into a deep pool and catch a snake, 'as big as a python'. If it did not struggle to get free, it was an indication that the person was fit to become one, and he had to kill it, perform a public dance, dressed in the neck of the skin tied to his forehead and the rest trailing behind him.' Lewis-Williams states that it is not sure whether this ritual was actually performed, as snakes are associated with trance.⁴²

Like the Muslim *Ratib*, autodidacticism is frowned upon, there has to be a teacher under whom the apprentice has to learn how to 'trance'. Bushman shamans are not a privileged class. Anyone can become a shaman. Over 50% of the males and 30% of the females have achieved the status of a 'shaman'. This contrasts with the *Ratib* wherein

⁴² J. D. Lewis-Williams and T. Dowson, eds. *Images of Power* (Johannesburg: Southern Books, 1989), 130.

only men participate, and a 'guide' is necessary. Whilst in the *Draupadi*, it is only females who perform the ritual, but men have recently taken part in the rite.

Stages of the Trance

There are three stages, which were traced by Siegel in laboratory work on the production of altered states of consciousness by drugs. The first is that of Entoptics which are images seen as luminous geometric shapes, ranging from zigzags, chevrons, dots, grids, vortexes and nested U-shapes. Lewis-Williams states that because these are products of the nervous system, all humans can experience them irrespective of their cultural background.⁴³ They were termed 'form-constants' by Heinrich Kluver, the pioneer researcher in drug-induced imagery.⁴⁴ They cannot be controlled, and because of their rapid presentation, the subjects find it difficult to keep pace. These entoptics are of salience because the shamans portrayed them in their rock art. A knowledge of these images enabled Lewis-Williams to deduce that the art of the shaman was linked to trance states.

The second stage is that of 'Construals'. In this stage, the person tries to interpret his experience of the Entoptics, which are dependent on his 'cognitive matrix', a storehouse of all his past experience, and tries to match the incoming information with that in memory to make it coherent. Depending on intentionality and expectations, he construes an object, such as when the shamans heard buzzing, they interpreted it as bees, so in their art they drew hives as nested U-forms and drew swarms of bees. The buzzing is also interpreted as rushing wind or falling water.

The third stage is that of Iconics in which the experience is described as sailing through a tunnel, or a vortex, in which the colours are brighter, and moving at a rapid pace. These entoptic images are superimposed on culture specific iconic imagery. The Khoisan see varieties of animals, whilst others will see objects present in their specific belief-environment. This is the deepest stage of the trance, when all the senses hallucinate, or give 'false' or paradoxical information. Heat may be felt as cold, humans may change

⁴³ Lewis-Williams and T. Dowson, *Contested*, 60. However Siegel has shown that animals can also see these images, and many animals hallucinate when subjected to drugs.

⁴⁴ Ronald Siegel and Murray Jarvic, 'Drug induced Hallucinations in Animals and Man.' in R. Siegel and L. J. West. eds., *Hallucinations*, (New York: Wiley, 1979), 107.

into animals. Lewis-Williams cites a western laboratory subject describing his changing into a fox, another into a centaur.⁴⁵ This has implications in Bushman trances for the presence of therianthropes in rock art. A devotee in the Hindu ritual of the *Kavadi*, thought that he was a monkey, had a pongid facies and grunted.⁴⁶ Lewis-Williams observes that their art is the bridge between this world and the next. Muslims use sound art *dhikr* to cross into an alternate reality in the ritual of the *Ratib*, where they too do not experience pain or are affected by fire, showing their cold hands to the audience to feel.⁴⁷

In a remarkable congruence, the Khoisan use a phrase 'die before you die' which is the exact phrase used by Muslims in *tasawwuf*. It would be edifying if this aphorism could be traced from the *Hadith*. It is a founding aphorism of the *Sufis*.⁴⁸ Katz opines that the word *n/um* when translated as power, sorcery, menstruation or medicine is too limited.⁴⁹ That it is rather an 'energy' which can travel along a pointed finger and kill a child for example, it cannot be seen by ordinary people, but can certainly be appraised by those trained in *kia*. It is located only in its existence in a bee, or a plant or a person. *N/um* also means 'a death thing' or 'a fight' which the healers can control and transfer to a person, or group. Therefore he suggests the retention of the word as the Kung understand it, since it appears in plants and inanimate objects. 'That in whatever form or function, *n/um* is consistently felt as strong', so that the god *Gao Na* is regarded as *n/um*. As one Kung put it, if *Gao Na* were to come 'near' to ordinary men, perhaps 100 yards away, his *n/um* would kill them.'⁵⁰ Only the very powerful healers can

⁴⁵The citation is from Siegel & West, *Hallucinations*, 105. A case of a centaur is described, which has direct parallels to Bushman therianthropes and as seen in Goodman's puma.

⁴⁶Alleyne Diesel and Patrick Maxwell, *Hinduism in Natal* (Pietermaritzburg: Natal University Press, 1993), 47.

⁴⁷Dennis Desai, 'The Ratiep as Sound Art of the Muslims' Ph. D. Thesis, University of Natal, 1993.

⁴⁸Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: Univ. North Carolina Press, 1975), 135.

⁴⁹Richard Katz, *Boiling Energy*, 95.

⁵⁰Lorna Marshall, 'The Medicine Dance of the !Kung Bushmen' in *Africa* Vol. 39:

(continued...)

approach the great god, while ordinary healers deal with a lesser god, *Kauha* and the spirits.

'*N/um* is the primary force in the Kung's universe of existence', and must be activated by song, dance or fire, for the healer to become healing energy. The Kung use the expression 'the *n/um* must *gam* or 'rise up'. Singing a song awakens the *n/um* and awakens (or opens) the healer's heart.

The *n/um* becomes stronger as it becomes hotter, and physical exertion accelerates it, as does the fire. It also appears when they rub live coals in their hands or over their chests, or pushing their heads into the fire. As *n/um* is heated to boiling point, it vaporises and rises from the spinal cord to the neck bone, where it induces *kia*. The Kung word meaning 'to boil' refers not only to boiling *n/um* or boiling water on the fire, but also to the ripening of plants, meat cooked in boiling water and ripened fruit.⁵¹

Katz states that *kia*, the experience of boiling *num*, 'is incorrectly translated as Trance, a word used to describe a variety of altered states of consciousness, including possession, hypnotic and meditation states. Its use remains ambiguous and inconsistent.' Therefore Katz prefers to retain the original Kung word.⁵² '*Kia* is not a unitary, unidimensional, linear experience', but a varying level of consciousness, changing in the same person at various times, and may 'capture different degrees of meaning at different times, may express itself in different forms of behaviour. 'For the Kung, *kia* refers to certain kinds of thoughts, feelings, and physical actions'. The Kung do not have sharp demarcations between the profound or shallow states, 'they sail like a glider as they come in and out of the various levels'.

When the perception of heating up of the *n/um* changes into a painful or fearful emotional state, expressed in a physical, cognitive or emotional way, the moment of

(...continued)
(1969), 347-81.

⁵¹ Richard Katz, *Boiling Energy*, 95. This is also a striking parallel amongst the Muslim mystics who would immerse their face in the fire, or sit in a burning pyre of wood analogous to the experience of Abraham in the fire. Schimmel, *Phenomenology*, 79.

⁵² Richard Katz, *Boiling Energy*, 96.

transcendence occurs, corresponding to Turner's liminal stage. If they can overcome their fears, 'by dying', or as the Kung in a remarkable statement aver: 'The death that kills us all', or can master the pain, they transform these changes into vehicles of healing and power.⁵³ This has a congruence in the so-called literate mysticisms, and has a particular correspondence with the Islamic tradition: 'Die before you die', or as Wyschord has defined a saint in postmodern genre, 'as a radical altruist, one who is dedicated to the alleviation of suffering irrespective of the cost to himself/herself... leading to a framework for power generation' i.e. a ritual leading to empowerment.⁵⁴ The beginning of *kia* is when the dancer feels the heat reaching its zenth, (congruent with the Hindu *tapas* or heat) and a person is in full *kia*, when he can transfer his healing power to the ill. He is then called a *n/um kausi*, a master of *n/um*.

The form of 'dying' is marked by certain physical concomitants: the participant may start running wildly, and then crash to the ground, or they may slip slowly down to the ground, with 'feet like soft rubber'. Lying on the ground, they sweat profusely, or have a clammy skin. They twitch and tremble, and sometimes so violently as to resemble a fit, with the body becoming stiff and rigid 'as a board.' At other times 'the body is limp, almost lifeless'. The eyes may be closed tightly, or if open, the eyeballs are often rolled up, with only the whites showing.⁵⁵ At other times, at the end of *kia*, the healer may '*hxabe*' himself, which are the pleasurable effects of *kia*, a feeling of calmness, happiness and peace, during which the Kung go about their normal duties, but 'only in a more open and relaxed manner'.⁵⁶ Katz attributes this relaxed feeling to the 'educational process during the *kia*, where the healer has learnt to control his

⁵³Richard Katz, *Boiling Energy*, 97.

⁵⁴Edith Wyschord, *Saints and Postmodernism: Revisioning Moral Philosophy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990), 56-60.

⁵⁵Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance. A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession* Translated by Brunhilde Biebuyck. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1985), 15. In addition Rouget describes the symptoms as being common to 'Trance, Hysteria and Madness. The person has also 'horripilation', swooning, thermal disturbances, such as cold palms, but sweating of the body and a feeling of heat, despite the weather being cold'.

⁵⁶ Rouget, *Music and Trance*, 203.

reactions during the *kia*'.⁵⁷

Enhanced perception and creativity during Trance

One of Katz's informants, stated that during the initial stage of *kia*, the 'soul' remains in the body, it is only when the final stage of *kia* is attained does it leave the body, 'through the head'. At this time it is in great danger, as it is in the domain of the god or the spirits, and they too can die in this stage, and 'become a spirit of the dead'. Whilst in 'full *kia*' or the transcendent state 'they can walk, dance or handle fire without being burnt'. Describing something like X-ray vision, they may predict the sex of infants in utero or describe the location and shape of a sickness inside someone's body. They may see at a great distance, enabling them to warn persons of lions lurking out of sight, or to describe people's activity in a far-away camp'.⁵⁸ Kau Dwa was totally blind yet an 'uncanny healer', but when in *kia* his sight was restored, 'and he could see the person's illness'.⁵⁹

The phenomenon of transference occurs when those who are assisting the healers, can also handle hot coal, being affected by the healer's power, homologous with the *Ratib* performance, where it is ascribed to *sakina*, a heirophany. Katz had questioned one of the healers, Toma Zho, whether the healers could go to the 'place where the gods and spirits are' and the reply was in the affirmative. When Toma Zho is in *kia*, he can visit his daughter who is in Kangwa, some sixty kilometres away, to see what she is doing'.⁶⁰ In Islamic mysticism, a similar description occurs.⁶¹ Goodman was prophetic when she remarked that a study of trance states will lead us to much beyond altered states of consciousness.

⁵⁷ In the *Ratib* where these manifestations do not occur, the response is conditioned, and control resides in the imam, who determines what to expect during the experience. With practice, the intermediate stages do not occur.

⁵⁸ Richard Katz, *Boiling Energy*, 100-101.

⁵⁹ Richard Katz, *Boiling Energy*, 212. The Muslim mystics describe a similar experience of a Companion, Ibn Abbas, who was blind, but his eyesight was restored as soon as he heard the prayer call. Uthmani, *Me'raj al-Muminin*, 55.

⁶⁰ Richard Katz, *Boiling Energy*, 186.

⁶¹ Many similar 'miracles' performed by the mystics have been described by Annemarie Schimmel, *Phenomenology*, 209.

The *kia* state was apotropaic and therapeutic. It was believed that everyone had an incipient illness, which could be prevented or cured. In severe illness, trance dance assists the patient. Katz cites Richard Lee describing a patient with cancer, who was *n/umed* every night and surprisingly lived longer than was expected. Latest research on enhancing the patients psychological strengths and defences, affirm that prayer through ritual and similar techniques does assist in healing.⁶² The enhancement of defence mechanisms implies the involvement of the immune system as we shall explicate in Chapter six.

That trance dances were used to celebrate happy occasions, such as return of long lost or family members from a foraging expedition, or the capture of a large beast, shows how integrated the rituals were in Kung life. The dance ritual is mainly for enjoyment and has entertainment value, very much resembling contemporary theatre. It has a social diaphasis in that the dance banishes isolation, fosters companionship and *communitas*. It has a psychotherapeutic function, which in contemporary terms would mean resolution of stress. The rituals are the Kungs' primary expression of 'religion', 'cosmology' and 'medicine', and therefore embrace the problems of their entire life and existence.

The Khoisan, described by early writers as 'being more animal than human', however, endured a superior existence and a more successful adaptation to the environment than contemporary white society in South Africa.⁶³ Unable to cope with the stresses of modern living, and made to fight across South Africa's borders in order to destabilise adjoining states which offered support to the ANC, in a violent and bloody war of attrition, white youth suffered the world's highest incidence of suicide

⁶² Anees A. Sheikh, ed., *Imagination and Healing* (New York: Baywood Publishing, 1984. Discusses cases of Depression, Cancer, Stress, phobias, even increasing the size of Mammary Glands by Auto-suggestion. See Larry Dossey. *Healing Words*. (New York: Harper Collins. 1993.) A patient with lung cancer, supposedly dying recovered by prayer and made the author leave clinical medicine to do research on healing by prayer which had significantly more positive results.

⁶³ T.A. Dowson & Lewis Williams, *Contested Images*, 205.

and family slayings.⁶⁴

All the dances were efficacious in enabling transcendence, 'to contact the 'powers', for learning to trance, i.e *kia*, for fulfilment and growth, where everyone can experience a sense of well-being, and what in the West is called spiritual development.⁶⁵ Since they acquired profound knowledge about the environment, sought knowledge about people and things, displayed enhanced creativity as seen in rock art, the dances were more than a vehicle for artistic expression.

Trance Rituals and Rock Art

Research on Southern African Rock art consisting of paintings and engravings led to the epochal 'trance hypothesis' of Lewis-Williams and Dowson, initiated by Patricia Vinnicombe, who showed that there is a nexus between art and religion in the Khoisan.⁶⁶ Lewis Williams utilised the 'top-down' approach, upon which we have also modelled our present thesis: that to understand cultural phenomena as constituted by ritual or art, an understanding of the people and their beliefs was an imperative *antecedant* to the attempt at interpretation of the phenomenology.⁶⁷

Their analysis of rock art on the basis that it reflects religious ideas of the artists led to an *avant garde* hypothesis. It is multidisciplinary and cross cultural, in that they studied Upper Palaeolithic Art in Europe, and from a neurophysiological basis including studies on the effect of hallucinogens on different nationalities, finding great similarities in the entoptics which was reflected in the art: the set of catenary curves, chevrons, zigzags, and spirals, (*mandalas*) demonstrating that rock art depicts experiences of a trance. The entoptics are homoversal as seen in Paleolithic art and in

⁶⁴ G. M. Karim, 'The Role of Religion in Coping with Stress' Paper delivered at the Seminar to address this problem organised by The South African National Council for Mental Health was held in Johannesburg. 1989.

⁶⁵ Recently institutions of Noetic Studies have been initiated in major centres, such as that in California. Willis Harman, *S.A. Medical Journal*, (1993): 310.

⁶⁶ P. Vinnicombe, 'Myth, Motive, and Selection in Southern African Rock Art.' in *Africa*, Vol. 42. (1972):192-204. She elicited that religion was the prime motive for the art.

⁶⁷ J. D. Lewis-Williams and T.A. Dowson, eds. *Images of Power: Understanding Bushman Rock Art* (Johannesburg: Southern Books, 1989), 117, 151.

shamanistic rituals.⁶⁸

The trance hypothesis does have some imperious critics such as A. R. Willcox⁶⁹, and Cyril Hromnik.⁷⁰ However, the multi disciplinary approach of the proponents and the enthusiastic reactions of the majority of researchers, such as Maggs and Sealy,⁷¹ Yates, Golson and Hall,⁷² Yates and Manhire,⁷³ and Yates, Parkington

⁶⁸J. Lewis-Williams and Thomas A. Dowson. 'Signs of All Times: Entoptic phenomena in Upper Palaeolithic Art.' in *Current Anthropology* Vol 29. (1988): 201-45.

⁶⁹A. R. Willcox, *The Rock Art of South Africa* (Johannesburg: Nelson Press, 1963.) He stated that he saw 'nothing of a religious nature in the Art, 'art pour l'art', whose goal is merely aesthetic pleasure'. In a later paper he reiterated these views and was more critical of Lewis-Williams hypothesis. A. R. Willcox, 'Meanings and Motives in San Rock Art- The views of Hammond-Tooke and J. D. Lewis-Williams Considered' *South African Archaeological Bulletin*. Vol. 39. no.139 (1984): 53-57.

⁷⁰Cyril A. Hromnik. 'The Bow of Shiva alias Heitsi-Eibib in the Rock Art of the Cape Quena.' in *Journal of Asian and African Studies* Vol 28, no. 3/4 (1993): 245-53. The 'triple curved bows in Southern African Art he claims as 'indisputably' of Indian origin, as the bow of Shiva, from a linguistic analysis of the term in Quena with Dravidian and Sanskrit languages, and the ithyphallic figures in rock art as expletive of a form of Shiva worship! However his *faux pas* is his animus and venomous quill against the trance hypothesis by calling it 'highly fictitious'.

⁷¹T.M. Maggs and J. Sealy. 'Elephants in Boxes' *New Approaches to South African Rock Art*. South African Archeological Society. Goodwin Series, vol 4.(1989): 44 -48. The presence of therianthrope figures, (humans with elephant heads), surrounded by Entoptics, (zigzag lines, boat-shaped objects, denticulate lines) denotes a trance state. The authors base their findings on the work of Siegel and Jarvik's epic article 'Drug Induced Hallucinations in Animals and Man', in R.K. Siegel and L.J. West, eds., *Hallucinations: Behaviour, Experience and Theory*. (New York:Wiley, 1975), 81-161. Siegel interviewed Huichol Indians from Mexico who partook of peyote, and they experience similar hallucinations of concentric and zigzag patterns.

⁷²R.Yates, J. Golson and M.Hall. 'Trance Performance:The Rock Art of Boontjieskloof and Sevilla.' in *S.A. Archaeological Bulletin* Vol. 40. (1985):70-80. The authors tested the trance hypothesis from the context of Drakensberg to South Western Cape, and also testing a 'pan San cognitive system' restated by Lewis-Williams. They consider A. R. Willcox's criticism as invalid.

⁷³R. Yates and A. Manhire. 'Shamanism and Rock Paintings:Aspects of the Use of the Rock Art in the South-West Cape, South Africa' in *S.A. Archaeological Bulletin*. Vol 46. (1991): 3-11. The authors are most emphatic that Lewis-William's has 'firmly established the characterisation of rock art as 'essentially shamanistic'. They argue that the rock art painting, the pigments of which were sacralised by eland blood, the 'quintessential power animal', was 'art as process'. They support Lewis-Williams in his contention that the rock face forms an

(continued...)

and Manshire,⁷⁴ places the criticism as ill-founded and uninformed of contemporary research on trance rituals. However, the qualified support by Mathias Guenther, led us to reconsider the 'trance hypothesis' from a methodological perspective.⁷⁵ Because the hypothesis is based on the presence of *drug induced* entoptics, primarily from the studies of Siegel and Jarvik, it became problematical.⁷⁶ Drugs induce a pathological or abnormal foundation on which the 'trance hypothesis' is based. We demonstrate in Chapter six that 'trances' are due to a normal physiological process, which both Goodman and Bourguignon observed. The perspective of the biogenetic structuralist school, which insists on cross-cultural multi disciplinary approaches is an advantage. By including Muslim and Hindu trance rituals, we elicit that these two groups do not experience entoptics. For Muslims drugs are totally banned.⁷⁷ Thus we

(...continued)

'interface' with the spirit world.

⁷⁴ R. Yates, J. Parkington and A. Manhire, *Pictures from the Past: A History of the interpretation of Rock paintings and Engravings of Southern Africa*. (Pietermaritzburg: Centaur. 1990). This is another work which lays bare the faults in methodology of those who regard rock art as 'art for art's sake'...that history can be manufactured through manipulation of oral and historical sources. Vinnicombe is credited as being the first to recognise religious elements in the art, upon which Lewis-Williams elaborated with a multi disciplinary approach into trance states and hallucinogens (Entoptics) to elucidate the 'art as process' meaning of rock art.

⁷⁵ Mathias Guenther. 'The Relationship of Bushman Art to Ritual and Folklore' in Thomas A. Dowson and David Lewis-Williams, eds., *Contested Images: Diversity in Southern African Rock Art Research* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1994), 267. 'This qualification is two-fold, deriving in each case from my unease about the nomothetic, all-embracing explanatory power ascribed by its proponents to the trance theory. The first qualification is...with the general cognitive and religious orientation of the Bushmen which, in terms of my own impressions of it, strikes me as not in accord with the sort of orientation that the 'trance hypothesis' would implicitly ascribe to these people...(since) I view the religions and cosmology of the Bushmen, as deeply and pervasively ambiguous and heterogenous, as fluid and lacking in standardisation. Thus, to ascribe uniformity and coherence to one of its genres, as the trance paradigm does with such vigour, is to go against the culture's cosmological and cognitive grain'. This is a classic instance of too narrow a focus in methodology, where the observer misses seeing the wood for the trees.

⁷⁶ Ronald K. Siegel and Murray E. Jarvik. 'Drug Induced Hallucinations in Animals and Man.' in R. Siegel and L. J. West eds. *Hallucinations* (New York: Wiley. 1979), 81-163.

* ⁷⁷ Some of the lay observers, such as Dr. Cassim D'Arcy, (Muslim News: December 1994) suggested that the performers were indulging in drugs to account for the
(continued...)

focussed on the presence of entoptics or flashing lights in our questioning the devotees of the *Ratib*.⁷⁸ We ascribed the lack of entoptics to what D'Aquili et al called 'entrainment', a conditioned response in altered states of consciousness arrived at by the devotee without going through the preliminary steps of a 'spiritual journey'.⁷⁹ We need to identify more cogent factors than the presence of entoptics in rock art.

The subject composition of rock art:

Mathias Guenther states that 'Bushman art and ritual share a number of significant symbolic and narrative themes', ranging from trance states, mainly of therianthropes, and form-constants. However, he claims that due to the fact that the 'majority of the animal representations- just under half of the painted figures are game animals, suggests another theme - that of the hunt, and the fact that they were painted in monochrome, suggests, that they were 'linked not so much to the mind and soul, but rather the stomach'. Mundane activity is depicted by hunts, expeditions, groups on the move, raids, and rituals. 'The fact that spatial and social content of much of the art - at shelters and aggregation sites, reinforces the densely social tone of Bushman art.'⁸⁰ He concludes that the 'secular components of Bushman art suggest that not all of the art is religious, informed with trance and transformation'. Because there is a 'relative infrequency of trance art compared to the mundane, there is certainly a large amount of 'myths depicted, the therianthropes (half man-half animals) dealing with inchoate beginnings of time and its incomplete Early people, their eclipse and the dawn of a new order.'⁸¹

Bushman art therefore is composed of three genres, art, ritual and narrative, and Guenther maintains that since the Bushman religion was 'pervasively ambiguous,

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phenomenon.

⁷⁸ A questionnaire was used to elicit the experience of the devotees.

⁷⁹C. D. Laughlin, J. McManus, & Eugene d'Aquili, *Brain Symbol & Experience: Toward a Neurophenomenology of Human Consciousness* (Boston: Shambhala 1990), 94.

⁸⁰Mathias Gunther. 'The Relationship of Bushman Art to Ritual and Folklore.' in *Contested Images*, 259.

⁸¹ Mathias Gunther, *Contested Images*, 261.

amorphous and heterogenous', Lewis-Williams have been eclectic in concentrating on a certain kind of art, and overlooking the far larger 'art for art's sake' components. Guenther also has misgivings about the methodological aspect of Lewis-Williams. It is 'unwarranted to read the myths as coded tales about shamans', and complains that the size of the sample is too small, and more research is needed. Finally he is otherwise ecstatic about the trance hypothesis 'that it is the most seminal and sophisticated explanatory construct of rock art research to date'.⁸²

Explication of Rock Art and the trance hypothesis:

The Dutch historians, continuing with the depiction of a negative image of the Khoisan blamed them for having introduced drugs to the black pastoralists in South Africa. The Bushman, were renowned for their use of plants for waterproofing reeds, also prolonged the life of dried meat with preservatives, later adopted by whites as a traditional Afrikaner delicacy called *biltong*, and used herbs and roots for medicinal purposes.⁸³ For hunting they evolved several poisons of selective potency, that could either only paralyse the animals and not kill, or kill instantly. They then went through the motions of dying with the animal in sympathy with its suffering. They developed incense for use in their rituals, which probably was of hemp origin. They had a vast knowledge of hallucinogens, predominately cacti-derived piperidines, akin to peyote, the *kanna* (*mesembryanthum spp*) was known to be an euphoriant, and *kwashi bulbs* as a hallucinogen.⁸⁴ They knew of the effects of 'love-apples' (atropine) and also of *Datura stramonium*, both producing altered states of consciousness (delirium, mental confusion).⁸⁵ Hemp extracts and lotions were used as analgesics. They used snuff for chest diseases, and smoked, as European civilisation did in the 1950s and 60s, what was most probably dagga, through pipes made out of gazelle and antelope horns. They later preferred both European pipes and tobacco probably for its potent nicotine

⁸² Mathias Gunther, *Contested Images*, 269.

⁸³ Richard Elphick and Hermann Giliomee, *The Shaping of South African Society*, 228.

⁸⁴ R. E. Schultes and A. Hofmann, *The Botany and Chemistry of Hallucinogens* (Springfield, Ill: Charles Thomas, 1973).

⁸⁵ We present a case diagnosed as 'possession' in Chapter five, but which was due to Belladonna poisoning having the triad of symptoms: thirst, confusion and hallucinations.

quality.⁸⁶

The three items which were used for barter with the colonists were in order of demand, tobacco, revealing that it was valuable; copper beads and discs for fashioning jewellery; and iron for their spear and arrow points. So much creativity implies sensitivity and intellectual prowess, as demonstrated in their art which is conceded as being far in advance of the rock art of Europe, in its delicate lines, and colouration.⁸⁷ They manufactured pigments from blood, ochres and lime, using egg white and plant pastes as binding agents, which made the paintings, usually in red, white and black, so colour fast that some parts still appear fresh. Many of the intellectual giants of the west used drugs, amongst them Aldous Huxley, Dante, Mozart, Schumann, Coleridge, Robert Louis Stephenson, Tolstoy, Goethe, William Blake, Wagner, Tartini, and others. In the scientific field the epochal discovery by Kekule, of the six-ring carbon molecule of organic chemistry, was seminal for biology and medicine.⁸⁸ It is only natural therefore that the Khoisan would do the same for enhancing creativity, or to escape from the stresses of life. Their lifestyle was steeped in the wilds, they 'foraged' for medicinal plants, food and hallucinogens. Thus their rock art was impressionistic of their experience, some of it produced under hallucinogenic altered states of consciousness because of the presence of Kluver's 'form-constants'. This does not negate that some of the trances were normal physiological reactions. The art expressed in entoptics does reveal that some of it is certainly under an altered state of consciousness, since we find parallels in the 'stooping' position of the trancers to be present in the stabbing postures in the *Ratib* as well. There are many drawings which can also be labelled as 'art for art's sake' as seen in the numerous scenes of impressionism, whilst therianthropes 'served as painted metaphors for a trance experience' where the medicine man becomes fused in trance with the animal. This is a common shamanistic experience.

Despite their 'primitiveness' but through their cave art and ubiquitous trance

⁸⁶Richard Elphick and Hermann Giliomee, *The Shaping of South African Society*, 8

⁸⁷ Dowson and Lewis-Williams, *Images of Power*, 62, 64, 67.

⁸⁸Roland Fischer. 'Cartography of inner Space.' in R.K. Siegel and L.J. West, eds., in *Hallucinations*, 217.

rituals performed at 'the least opportunity' the Khoisan employed universal techniques of stress resolution and enjoyed a more tranquil, contented and successful life than the 'white' invaders and colonisers. They were what Marshall Sahlins defined as 'the ideal society'.⁸⁹ An early writer Lady Gordon-Duff described the failure of white adaptation to the pressures of living on the tip of the wild untamed African continent by stating that they suffered from 'two diseases, brandy and billiards', by which they escaped from their problems, but returned home inebriated to abuse their defenceless women.⁹⁰

Lewis-Willaims's contribution on rock-art described as the 'archeology of thought', or more favoured as the 'archeology of human understanding', has profoundly influenced the perception of the Khoisan people, their art and their religion throughout the world. Finally, in a tribute to the Kung's awareness of 'spiritual knowledge' Katz claims that 'what is a secret reserved for the few' in contemporary 'civilised' society, the art of healing through knowledge and the induction of trances was available to all amongst the Bushman and actively sought as a communal activity.⁹¹ According to the founding statement of our thesis, that trance rituals stimulate the immune system, modern societies indeed can learn some valuable lessons in emulating Bushman rituals and their philosophy of living.

Trance Rituals amongst Indian Immigrants:

The Voortrekkers from the Cape Colony established the Republic of Natalia in 1838. However, their independence was short-lived, since in 1843, Natal became a colony of the British. It was poor, undeveloped, wild and bushy and derelict. No European settler could be enticed to migrate there. One of the reasons for the neglect was the pride of the Zulus and their reluctance to be subservient, and thus no labour could be obtained to develop agriculture, even though the province had abundant water, was blessed with a benign tropical climate and very fertile soil. The farmers

⁸⁹Marshall Sahlins, 'Notes on the original affluent society.' in Richard B. Lee and Irven de Vore, eds., *Man the Hunter* (Chicago: Aldine, 1968), 85-89.

⁹⁰Lady Gordon Duff, *Letters from the Cape* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller, 1925). This also resulted in many white women seeking shelter with Muslims and a probable cause of conversion to Islam, as mentioned by Shell.

⁹¹Richard Katz, *Boiling Energy*, 10.

petitioned the Government for the importation of 'Coolie labour'⁹² in October 1851, but the request was resisted by the Indian government.

At the beginning of the 19th century, Tamil-nad India was colonised by the British, who ousted the Delhi Muslim Sultans in the 16th century followed by the Moghuls who had conquered them in the 17th. Weakened by internecine disputes and disunity amongst the Tamils, their domination and collapse was predictable. Henning states that the conquerors 'tolerated the evil religions and the uncivilised habits of the peasantry,...and 'acquired an intense prejudice against the conquered masses'. In the process they were blind to the great architectural feats as displayed by the ethereal beauty of the Taj Mahal or the intricate carvings in Meenakshi Temple in Madurai, or those in the Ajanta Caves.⁹³ It was believed that Western civilisation and Indian culture could not be reconciled.⁹⁴

British economic policy imposed severe hardship on the Tamils as the English required cotton-crops for their factories, forcing the Indians to abandon food-crops. This resulted in famine amongst the people, compounded by severe drought. When the price of cotton dropped, the peasants were overstocked with cotton, but suffered an ensuing shortage of food. Many farmers lost or abandoned their lands and migrated to the towns, where they suffered even more hardship and penury. In South Africa, the indigenous population, especially in Natal could not be subjugated to work in the plantations. Unable to come to terms with them, the government suggested a system of 'indentured labouring' whereby Indians would be employed for five years and then released as 'free Indians' with full rights.⁹⁵ As in the Cape, the colonisers never fulfilled their promises of 'full rights', and the Indians were subjected to discrimination at all levels, even in judicial matters, complaints were ignored and the farmer was seldom

⁹²A derogatory term for Indians. The word represents a 'labourer'.

⁹³ C. J. Henning, *The Indentured Indian in Natal 1860-1917* (Delhi:Promilla Press, 1993), 7

⁹⁴In the context of our thesis, it has now been acknowledged that the frequency of 'trances' induced in the local as well as foreign visitors to the Ajanta caves, was due to the 'harmonics' engendered by hollow chambers acting as 'a giant drum'. E.M. Forrester, *A Passage to India* (London: Penguin Press, 1945).

⁹⁵Henning, *The Indentured Indian*, 7.

found guilty of transgressing the Labour Contract.

The first Indians arrived in the ship *Truro*, a paddle-steamer from Madras which docked in Durban on the 16th November 1860. They consisted of 342 persons, of whom 83 were children under the age of 14, whilst there were 75 women between 16 and 46 years of age. The Hindus were mainly South Indian, and there were a sprinkling of Muslims and Christians amongst them. Ten days later, the S.S. *Belvedere* arrived from Calcutta with 351 Indian adults, and the same number of children as in the *Truro*.⁹⁶

Conditions on board the ships were appalling and unhealthy. Each passenger was allotted a space three feet by six. Many of the passengers died en route, and 'there was a constant fear of assault, especially sexual assault' from fellow passengers and the ship's crew. A ship's surgeon was charged for 'rape, attempted rape, or indecent assault against female immigrants'.⁹⁷ The life of the labourers was one of extreme hardship coupled with inhuman conditions of service, bad housing, insufficient food of poor quality, long hours of work, with children working eleven hours, women carrying heavy loads. The sick had to walk nine miles to a doctor, and only the very ill were allowed medical treatment. Castor oil purgation was usually given for stomach aches. These abdominal diseases were due to non-existent or bad sanitation coupled with a contaminated water supply. Arbitrary taxes were imposed, wages were withheld or not paid at all.

Henning states that the 'indentured labourer' was a 'euphemism' for the worst kind of slavery in the British Empire.⁹⁸ Women had to pay an agonizing Tax of three pounds annually in order to be allowed to live with their husbands, when they were only earning half a pound a month. Fatima Meer draws attention to this added cruelty, by stating that 'nowhere else in the world did a woman have to pay a tax for living with her

* ⁹⁶Fatima Meer, *Portrait of Indian South Africans* (Durban: Avon Press, 1969), 10.

✱ ⁹⁷Meer, *Portrait*, 10.

⁹⁸ Henning, *Indentured Indians*, 105-106, 1, 8, 85-88.

husband'.⁹⁹ The death rate was the highest in the Natal colony compared to other parts of the world. Those labourers who survived these abominable servitudes, started their own small agricultural holdings, and were so successful that they were competing with the farmers and posed a threat to the economic hegemony of the whites. The racial discrimination practised in private now became legally institutionalised by many restrictions being legislated in the Provincial Chamber. Compared to the extermination and prejudice against the Bushmen leading to their extinction, which was mostly from the Afrikaner or Dutch, the Senior Clerk for South Africa in England, Edward Fairfield, commented that the 'prejudice against the Indians throughout South Africa was wholly English'.¹⁰⁰

* Fatima Meer has detailed the inhuman conditions that the early Indians had to face and categorises the myriad of laws enacted to control their movement, their residential areas, trading localities and even determining their social associations. Under the Immorality Act, social associations and sexual relations between the races was a criminal offence.¹⁰¹ Departments were enacted with euphemistic titles, such as the Extension of Universities Education Bill (1959) actually barred non-whites from attending white Universities, whilst the Department of Community Development vindictively restricted ownership and occupation of land and premises by Indians in white areas (1950). They were forcibly removed to designated areas, often the worst town lands, with the barest of facilities, far from their workplaces. The Minister for the Interior Dr. T. E. Dinges brazenly proclaimed in Parliament that the aim of these bills was to 'make life for the Indians so difficult that they would seek voluntary repatriation to India'. The Group Areas Act legalised the robbery of Indian property, and destroyed their economic progress in the name of 'community development'.¹⁰² All these discriminatory laws that were enacted against them were purely on a racist basis,

⁹⁹Henning, *Indentured Indians*, 95-104.

¹⁰⁰ Henning, *Indentured Indians*, 104.

¹⁰¹Fatima Meer, *Portrait*, 44-49.

¹⁰²W. E. de Klerk, *The Puritans in Africa* (London: Rex Collins, 1975), 242.

compared to that pertaining in the early Cape where the discrimination was religious.¹⁰³

Hindu Rituals

Hinduism, unlike other traditions, has no historical founder, nor has it a universal creed, 'no single core of theological beliefs and no uniformly authoritative text'.¹⁰⁴ Compared to Bushman beliefs and worship, 'Hinduism is unique amongst the world religions in its rich tradition of Goddess worship, both past and present'.¹⁰⁵ David Kinsley writing about the worship of Goddesses comments 'that no other living tradition displays such an ancient, continuous, and diverse history of goddess worship'... providing the richest source of mythology, theology, and worship.¹⁰⁶ The worship of the goddess in India dates from pre-Aryan times, before 1500 BCE, based on the presence of terra-cotta goddess figurines from the sites of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa.¹⁰⁷ As in Islam, 'Hinduism in South Africa functions at two levels: firstly the cultus based ritualistic-devotionalistic approach, and secondly, the scripture - philosophical approach'. The division has parallels in expressions. The former centres around the priest and temple and is more widely popular, whilst the latter centres around the guru and ashram and has a more contemplative approach.¹⁰⁸

The reason for the worship of goddesses persisting in South Africa is due to social status of the early Indians and the deprived and discriminated political environment. Georgina Buijs asserts that the 'goddesses were associated with infectious diseases, both as 'senders of disease, and also 'divine protectors against disease'. Thus the rituals were propitiatory, and worship of the goddesses was a 'functional and

¹⁰³I. D. MacCrone, *Race Attitudes in South Africa* (Johannesburg: W.U. Press. 1937), 70,73.

¹⁰⁴Patrick Maxwell & Thillayvel Naidoo, 'Religions of India.' in John de Gruchy and Martin Prozesky, eds., *A Southern African Guide to the World Religion* (Cape Town: David Phillip, 1991), 68.

¹⁰⁵Alleyn Diesel, 'The Worship and Iconography of the Hindu Folk Goddesses in Natal'. in *Journal for the Study of Religion*. Vol 5. no.2. (September 1992), 3.

¹⁰⁶David Kinsley, *The Hindu Goddesses* (California:California Univ. Press,1986), 1.

¹⁰⁷ Cited by Alleyn Diesel. (1992).

¹⁰⁸qv Footnote 12. 153.

pragmatic response to a perceived threat.¹⁰⁹ The early Indians were prone to illhealth due to hardships at work and bad living conditions, with appalling nutrition as evinced by the diseases prevalent of dysentery, bronchitis and tuberculosis, as well as a high rate of suicide, another indicator of prevailing stress.¹¹⁰ The labourers had to fall back on traditional methods of healing and mental stability,

At a seminar on the Kavadi held at the University of Durban-Westville, Guru H. Dewa maintains that the 'Hindu characteristic of multiple-descriptions of God has earned it the label of 'Polytheism'.¹¹¹ Swami Saradananda critiques Max Muller's use of the term 'henotheism' to describe Hindu beliefs in several deities as a 'western perception, when Hindu concepts are mercilessly cast into Semitic vocabulary, their true constructs become misconstrued'.¹¹² Because of the lack of a uniform Scripture, there is considerable latitude in theological ideas, and the 'main tradition tends to reconcile various options than firmly chose one to the exclusion of others'.¹¹³ It is this aspect which makes it a 'hospitable tradition' able to absorb many cultural and subtraditions over the centuries. This syncretisms has been misread by some observers of Islam at the Cape, since some ceremonies, amongst them the *Ratib*, were termed * 'Hindu rituals' by Achmat Davids in an earlier work.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹Georgina C. Buijs. 'The Role of the Mother-Goddess Mariamma in Natal.' *Religion in Southern Africa*, Vol. 1, no.1 (1980), 1-8..

¹¹⁰ Henning, *Indentured Indians*, 57. The Wragg Commission (1885-1887) recommended that medical facilities and hospitals be provided for the Indians.

¹¹¹Guru H. Dewa, 'A Vedantic View of Hindu Mythology' in Thillayvel Naidoo. ed., *Kavadi and the Worship of Muruga* (Durban: University of Durban-Westville. 1987), 16.

¹¹²Swami Saradananda. 'Philosophical Foundations of Muruga Worship.' in T. Naidoo, ed., *Kavadi*, 26.

¹¹³Patrick Maxwell and Thillayvel Naidoo, 'The Religions of India' in John de Gruchy and Martin Prozesky, *Guide Religions*, 43.

* ¹¹⁴Achmat Davids, *Mosques of Bo-Kaap* (Cape Town: IAAIS, 1980), 33. In a later work co-authored with Y. de Costa *Pages from Muslim History* (Cape Town:Tricentenary Committee. 1995) probably under the influence of his co-author, relented and described it as 'mystical syncretisms', due to the presence of mystical orders of the *Qadiriyyah*, *Rifa'iyyah*, *Chistiyya*, *Naqshbandiyya*, *Shadhiliyyah* at the Cape. (After S. W. Zwemmer. 'Islam at Cape Town'. *The Muslim World* (Hartford: Duncan Black, 1925).

* Fatima Meer in her classic study *Portrait of Indian South Africans* classifies the rites into private and public, both being propitiatory, for aleatory and healing purposes.¹¹⁵ The public rituals are the Festivals of Draupadi and Kavadi which are Trance rituals performed in South Africa since 1860.¹¹⁶ As there were hardly any Brahmins, *Ksatriyas* and *Vais'yas* amongst the labourers, there was a 'predilection for certain religious forms: namely a non-scriptural, devotional and ritualistic cultus'.¹¹⁷ Their expression of Hinduism was 'at a popular rather than a philosophical level'.¹¹⁸ The *Sanathanist dharma* is based less on Scripture than other schools of Hinduism.¹¹⁹ They also 'observe certain distinctive and colourful rituals and ceremonies which are not emphasised by other branches of Hinduism'.¹²⁰ The main participants of these rites are the poor and those unable to offer daily *pūja* prayers, due to pressure of work schedules. The Indians were mainly menial and agricultural labourers.¹²¹ Thus the ten day festival allows them to compensate and achieve the same benefits as the missed *pūjas*.¹²²

The daily *pūja* are performed by the temple priest, and occasional or optional

¹¹⁵ A.J. Arkin, K.P. Magyar, & G. P. Pillay, *The Indian South Africans* (Pietermaritzburg: Owen Burgess, 1989), 155.

* ¹¹⁶ Fatima Meer, *Portrait*, 150.

* ¹¹⁷ Meer, *Portrait*, 146.

¹¹⁸ Alleyn Diesel, & Peter Maxwell, *Hinduism in Natal* (Pietermaritzburg: Natal University Press, 1993), 51.

¹¹⁹ A parallel was ascribed to the practice of *Tasawwuf*, where normative Islam was claimed to be more Scriptural. We show that the mystical aspects of Islam are indeed based on 'essentialist texts', the Quran and Hadith.

¹²⁰ Alleyn Diesel, & Peter Maxwell, *Hinduism*, 16.

* ¹²¹ Fatima Meer, *Portrait*, 155. This compares with the *Ratib*, where it is usually the working classes who perform the ritual. The higher forms of Hinduism are reserved for the *Brahmin*, the higher castes.

¹²² Hilda Kuper is more accurate in stating that the *Kavadi* was a thirteen day festival whilst Alleyn Diesel says that the Draupadi lasted eighteen days. Hilda Kuper, 'An ethnographic description of Kavady, a Hindu Ceremony in South Africa.' *African Studies*, vol.18, no. 3 (1959), 118-32. Alleyn Diesel. 'Hindu Firewalking in Natal.' *Journal for the Study of Religion*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1990), 17-33.

when individuals perform the ritual of welcoming the divinity which is represented in its image. There are some fourteen segments, and their combination is flexibly determined by the devotee. The god is invited to be present, offered a seat and greetings are made. Water is offered for the symbolic washing of the god's feet, face, teeth and body, and some of it given for sipping, which may be in a form of a mixture of honey and water. The god is anointed with perfumes, incense and unguents. The icon is garlanded or offered flowers which are left at the feet. Incense in a special bowl is burned and waved around the image. A burning lamp symbolic of enlightenment is waved in a circle around the statue. This is symbolic of *darshan*, the most important objective of the puja, which is to seek inspiration or insight. The farewell greeting is made with the two palms touching and raised in veneration.¹²³

Despite the sharp distinction, Hindu rituals are both varied and ridden with symbolism and 'abstruse' philosophy. Two rituals germane to our study, since they are congruent with both Bushman and Muslim ritual theatres, and in the latter case, have numerous similarities in phenomenology in its non-verbal aspect, provide fortuitously, an exemplary case study for diverse explications for homologous performances.

The Festival of Draupadi

A firewalking ritual with an interesting mythology, it is celebrated in honour of the goddess *Draupadi*, the heroine of the ancient epic, the *Mahabharata*. She was born from the sacrificial fire prepared by her father, King *Draupada*. She was believed to be an incarnation of the goddess Lakshmi and a wife of the five Pandya Brothers.

Although Diesel states that there is no record of her being a goddess in the original Sanskrit version of the *Mahabharata*.¹²⁴ Hildebeitel states that the goddess was 'a powerful goddess and the central symbol of their goddess festivals and fire-walking rituals'.¹²⁵ But South Indian tradition states that she walked on fire to confirm her

¹²³ Adopted from Patrick Maxwell and Thillayvel Naidoo, 'The Religions of India' in John de Gruchy and Martin Prozesky. eds., *A Southern African Guide to World Religions*. (Cape Town: David Phillip, 1991), 68.

¹²⁴ Maxwell and Naidoo, *Guide*, 52.

¹²⁵ Alf Hildebeitel, *The Cult of Draupadi. I: Mythologies from Gingee to Kurukshetra*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 438-48.

chastity or to protect herself from a number of attempts to defile her by her enemy, Duryodhana who tried to disrobe her. She had attained the status of a fierce fire goddess in later South Indian tradition, one who could bestow blessings on her devotees.¹²⁶ To propitiate her, 'cool' foods had to be offered such as porridge, fruits and milk, Fever is regarded as 'anger of the goddess' so offerings are made at the temple and she is supplicated to depart from the ill-person. This is a classical instance of an attribution of illness to a deity and the utilisation of rituals for cure.¹²⁷

Preparatory rites are necessary, i.e. abstinence from meat and alcohol, and continence to achieve a state of purification. These are not to be equated with ascetic practices. Swami Saradananda writes that Muruga worship is not derived from a philosophy that preaches world-negation.¹²⁸ In fact the practices associated with Kavadi teach self-conquest.¹²⁹ The rituals are spread over ten to fourteen days in preparation of the walk over a ten metre fire trench. With loud drumming, the devotees proceed in chariots to a nearby river for ritual washing. Hilbeitel states eighteen days of preparation is needed as the goddess is potent, possessed of evil power. The men don thin coloured cloths around their waists whilst the women retain their saris. The trance begins at this point and with another burst of drumming the procession then reaches the fire trench and the devotees either run or walk across it.

Fire walking in India has been mentioned by Frazer and as remarked upon by Diesel, almost all the details also occur in the Natal firewalking ceremonies. It has been frequently documented that the devotees do not display any sign of injury from burning, and do not feel any pain. Firewalking occurs amongst the !Kung as well as the Muslims

¹²⁶Alley Diesel, & Peter Maxwell, *Hinduism*, 17.

¹²⁷ 'Attribution' is an important category for the treatment and causation of illness. The Muslim healer (Imam) and the laity diagnose *Jinn* Possession when a physical cause cannot be found to explain bizarre behaviour, as expounded in our paper on '*Jinn* Possession? Some Cases.' This also occurs amongst the Zulus, where an 'evil spirit' causes the *Umfufuyana* Syndrome, whilst *Indiki* is attributed to an alien spirit. Harriet Ngubane, *Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine* (London: Academic Press, 1977), 148-9.

¹²⁸Compare *Zuhd* in Islam, the precursor of *Tasawwuf*, the mystical dimension of Islam, which preaches 'world-domination', rather than world negation.

¹²⁹Swami Saradananda, *Kavadi*, 35

during the *Ta'ziyyah*. This isomorphism indicates a universal human response which can only be holistically evaluated as a psycho biological phenomenon. Because the physical phenomenology of this ritual is analogous in major detail with the *Ratib*, the latter was misconstrued as a Hindu ritual by many observers.

The Festival of Kavadi

Legend states that Iduman, one of the disciples of Agasthiyar was asked to relocate two hills, which he did by means of a *Kavadi*. When he stopped to rest, the hills became fixed to the earth and could not be moved. He called upon Lord Muruga, who refused to help, and an argument leading to a fight ensued. Iduman was killed. However he was revived by Muruga as an act of mercy, whereupon Iduman fell at the feet of Muruga in acknowledgement of his power'. He was granted absolution, and was able to lift the two hills again.¹³⁰ *Kavadi* is held in honour of the God Muruga, the son of Shiva, who is believed to have healing powers and able to dispel misfortune, and the devotees enact the symbols in remembrance of these events in South Indian religious mythology.' Deriving her data from the myths found in the *Shiva Purana*, Hilda Kuper states that the central deity is Subrahmanya, one of the sons of Shiva. and that the festival lasts thirteen days.¹³¹ The literal meaning of *Kavadi* is 'a rod with weights suspended at both ends', symbolic of carrying a burden. Hilda Kuper says the word refers to a pole. Diversity of the deities found by her, and their differing nomenclature employed by our informants and sources, reveals the difficulties faced in deriving information 'bottom-up', leading to problems in interpretation.

'The term *Kavadi* comes from decorated frames carried by the worshippers as a kind of penitential burden, usually as a propitiary rite.¹³² The rite has been celebrated since the tenth century BC. The ceremony lasts ten days, nine of which are spent as

¹³⁰Surender Bhana 'The Tamil Community in South Africa.' in *Kavadi*, 1.

¹³¹Hilda Kuper, 'An Ethnographic Description of Kavady, a Hindu ceremony in South Africa' in *African Studies* vol.18. no.1 (1959), 18-32.

¹³²The *raison d'être* for Hindu rituals being mainly propitiary, is the belief that ill-fortune, illness, happiness and tragedy is due to malevolent forces or anger of the gods. See Gerald Pillay, Thillayvel Naidoo and Suliman Dangor. 'Religious Profile' in A.J. Arkin, K.P. Magyar and G.C. Pillay, (eds) *The Indian South Africans* (Pietermaritzburg: Owen Burgess, 1989), 155.

preparatory, purifying rituals which include fasting.¹³³ On the tenth day the worshippers carry the image of Muruga on a rod with two vessels at each end containing milk. In one of the better descriptions of the Kavadi held in Johannesburg, Thillayvel Naidoo states that the ritual starts with a procession, and most of the gods that he mentions are male. The word *vel* refers to a spear carried by Lord Muruga.

The two hills represent Shiva and Shakti. Bhana explicates that 'in the journey of life we have...to battle to steer a course of righteousness'...and it cannot be completed without the help of the lord Muruga who represents Lord Shiva.¹³⁴ Muruga is worshipped principally in Tamil-nad, and as god-head he is said to be the controller of the seven worlds. Offerings were made to him of rice and blood, usually accompanied by ritual dancing. A goat was slaughtered to obtain the blood offering.

Whilst a fuller description is given in the book by Diesel and Maxwell, some quotations are significant in obtaining data for comparative purposes:

'Hindus believe that self inflicted pain is a sign of devotion to Muruga', therefore the devotees have their tongues and cheeks pierced with small trident spears (*vels*). They also have rows of hooks strung across their chests and backs from which fruit and marigolds are hung. Some devotees also go into trances, in which they believe they become possessed by a particular deity.¹³⁵

Hilda Kuper attributes the 'trance' to the effect of music, and claims that it is the music building up to a crescendo, which spreads the trance amongst the audience. Popular conceptions amongst the devotees are that it is 'power' of the goddess which protects them from feeling any pain, or from bleeding. After the trance the devotees experience a feeling of relaxation and well being, and 'are cured'.¹³⁶

¹³³ Fasting in Hinduism allows the consumption of water, milk or juices, and is not as ascetic, mortifying as in other traditions. In Islam it lasts only a day, from sunrise to sunset, 'when nothing may pass between the lips, nor can spittle or phlegm be swallowed'.

¹³⁴ Surender Bhana, 'The Tamil Community in South Africa' in Thillayvel Naidoo, ed., *Kavadi and the Worship of Muruga* University Durban-Westville, 1987.

¹³⁵ Alleyn Diesel, & Peter Maxwell, *Hinduism in Natal*(Pietermaritzburg: Natal University Press, 1993, 43.

¹³⁶ This is the stage of '*trophotropism*' which causes the states of *nirvana* and *samadhi*.
(continued...)

The *Kavadi* devotees claim that their behaviour is due to possession by the goddess. Diesel describes the behaviour of one of the devotees who believed that he was possessed by the Monkey God, behaved as a monkey, displayed a simian *facies* and verbalised barks and grunts. *Hanuman* is a male deity. Similarly *Muruga* is also male.¹³⁷ Although both men, women and children take part, it is the women who worship the goddesses. Men often 'don *saris*, female attire, and imitate female gestures'.¹³⁸ Naidoo has given a description of the ceremony held at the Johannesburg Melrose Temple, and states 'that the piercing of the body with needles and fire-walking are acts of atonement to win the grace of Lord Muruga'.¹³⁹ This may be analogous to the Khoisan therianthropes, with both imaginary personality and physical transformations occurring. Reynold Nicholson reports on the Islamic mystics changing into differing nationalities, from a Kurd, then into an Arab of the desert, then as a doctor of theology.¹⁴⁰ The ritual was purported to cure afflictions and Fatima Meer describes how a 12 year old boy suffering from epilepsy could not muster the courage to allow himself to be pierced by a *vel*, to be repeated for three consecutive years, as prescribed by the healer.¹⁴¹

Like the three traditions within the ambit of our study, the temple priest, or attendants healers, together with ritual composed of *mantra*, music, and rhythms results in cure by inducing a trance'.

(...continued)

However we offer an alternate hypothesis for the euphoria, relaxation and relief from pain, and lack of bleeding. (Chapter six).

¹³⁷ Thillayvel Naidoo, 'Kavadi: Worship through ceremonial ritual' in *Religion in South Africa*. Vol. 2 no.2 (July 1981): 3-11.

¹³⁸ Hilda Kuper, *Indian People in Natal* (Durban: Natal University Press, 1960), 224.

¹³⁹ Thillayvel Naidoo, (1981):7. He utilises a term which probably refers to an altered state of consciousness: 'mythical consciousness refers to going...beyond normal experience'.

¹⁴⁰ Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* rev. ed. (London: Kegan Paul, 1963), 144. There are also reports of telekinesis, a sofa moving round the room, of the transposition of a saint's tomb when a rival mystic tried to visit it. This is an advance on the flying journeys of the Khoisan, or the physical transformation into animals.

¹⁴¹ Fatima Meer, *Portrait*, 150.

Verbal elements of Trance Ritual

Khoisan ritual has no text and very little verbalisation, and like the Drama of the *Ratib*, no textual elements of the Kavadi ritual have appeared in the South African literature. We have fortuitously been given part of the text written in Tamil, with the English transliteration and translation, being a fraction of a long ritual ceremony by Dr P. G.P. Naidoo of Lenasia, Chairman of the Johannesburg Tamil Federation.

The translation does not convey the sonorous lilt of the actual performance, since it is not necessary to understand the contents, the sound of the mantra alone is invested with power.

The magnanimity and infinite mercy of our lord Muruga even towards his enemies is evident by this incident. (of Induman carrying Kavadi). The peacock dances at the sight of dark clouds and the cock hails the dawn to welcome daylight, both of which (rain and sunlight) are indispensable for the existence of all beings on Earth.

Compared to the Bushman dances which according to Katz have 'a strong emphasis on non-verbal communication and experience, the Hindu dances are markedly verbalised, and the preparatory rituals are often longer than the ceremony itself.¹⁴² The preparations in the Khoisan rituals are short, since everyone joins in at the slightest opportunity, compared to the Kavadi which requires nine days of preparation and ascetic exercises for the performance of the ritual on the last day. Contemplative *praxis* is a *sine qua non* during the preparatory phase.

According to Laughlin et al, ritual behaviour occurs in mammals, chimpanzees etc, including secular human behaviour, according to their definition of ritual: Ritual is 'structured, institutionalised, purposive, repeated behaviour'. Ritual therefore precedes speech. The latter is a highly complex and evolved cerebral process, and it is most improbable for it to antecede ritual. Whilst the Khoisan used art as an expression of their religious experience, Muslims use sound art. Carl Ernst's work on *shath* or irrational speech uttered during trances amongst *Sufis*, indicated that it was spoken in an altered state of consciousness, when it could have a paradoxical, or profound

¹⁴²R. Katz, Boiling Energy, 8.

meaning, unintelligible to the listener.¹⁴³

Islamic authorities have resolved that such speech is not to be regarded as 'rational', and the person uttering them should not be held legally responsible for his actions or words. In the famous case of the mystic al-Hallaj who was executed for his utterances, there was a travesty of justice, since the decision was politically motivated. In this respect we concur with Staal that mantra are irrational and nonsensical to the auditionees in a different state of consciousness. Language is a relatively late development in man, and Staal admits that ritual is among the important human activities, older than language. Animals have rituals similar to humans, but have other systems for communication as well. These range from chirps, grunts, barks, roars to a myriad of specie-specific sounds.

The Bushman show advanced methods of perception whilst in *kia*, and animals too have extrasensory perceptions concerning earthquakes and other disasters. Dogs have an acuter sense of hearing beyond the human ear which has a limit of 25,000 hertz, whilst bats have receptors for ultrahigh radar frequencies. A recent report of tortoises frantically seeking higher ground in which to lay their eggs in the Free state was explained on the basis of fore-knowledge of the impending floods that were predicted to occur.¹⁴⁴ Therefore it is presumptions to state that animals are a primitive type of creation, just as notions of primitive man have been discarded, e.g. a typical 'Bushman' is highly specialised for his environment...and has the most successful adaptation by man of it.

An example of philosophical 'debitage' is Ellison Banks Findly's statement that the power of Mantra, comes from 'the truth and the order that stands at the centre of the Vedic universe,' and that the 'locus of power of the mantra is in its pronouncement by a religious functionary'¹⁴⁵ Mantra ties to r-t-a, the transcendent truth of the cosmic and human orders, whilst *man* signifies mind, and *tra* signifies liberation. The chanting of mantra is meant to free the mind and body from the present reality. Fritz Staal cites

¹⁴³Carl Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism* (Albany: SUNY. 1985)

¹⁴⁴G. M. Karim. 'Debate on Evolution'. Letters Page, *The Star*, 19-11-1997.

¹⁴⁵Harvey Alper, *Mantra*, 17, 30.

Kuroda as distinguishing three functions of language: the communicative presupposes the objectifying, i.e. intention and both presuppose the objective, which expresses meaning, but involves neither intention nor communication. He further suggests that 'the magical use of language in primitive rituals' may have to be understood along similar lines'.¹⁴⁶

Tambiah is of the view that 'in ritual, language appears to be used in ways that violate the communicative function, and further that they need not be communicative' whilst 'Mantras are not speech acts', according to Fritz Staal.¹⁴⁷ John Taber observes that 'Mantras are self contradictory and non-nonsensical' a position affirmed by Tambiah.¹⁴⁸ Fritz Staal solved the problem by concluding that 'Religion or languages are not the proper categories within which to evaluate the significance of these ritual chants. Rather, their significance lies in the structure and composition of the resulting edifice, and the abstract structural qualities. If there are anywhere structures similar to these ritual features, it is in the realm of music'.¹⁴⁹ We thus found Gilbert Rouget's book to be essential but propose that the realm of study is psycho-neurobiological.¹⁵⁰ Mantra were used for exorcism, and Kenneth G. Zysk in his contribution entitled 'Mantra in Ayurveda: A study of the Use of Magico-Religious Speech in Ancient Indian Medicine' regarding healing comments 'that we are presented with an entire pantheon of demons who bring out bodily distress...The cure for these diseases required an elaborate religious ritual...to the accompaniment of mantras'.¹⁵¹ Mantra thus have affinity in their physiological effects with the Islamic utterance, the *shath*, of the mystics, and the mechanism of induction of an altered state of consciousness generated by the *Dhikr*.

¹⁴⁶ Harvey Alper, *Mantra*, 67.

¹⁴⁷ Harvey Alper, 67.

¹⁴⁸ Harvey Alper, 149.

¹⁴⁹ A Magazine *Quantum Healing* published by the Ayurvedic College, Nagpur India has devoted a recent issue to 'Music Therapy' wherein different *ragas* (Musical compositions) are recommended for various illness such as Hypertension, Angina, Ulcers, etc, with Cassettes being available. The 'drone' is paramount for producing harmonics. (overtones).

¹⁵⁰ Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance*.

¹⁵¹ Harvey Alper, *Mantra*, 123.

The *Ratib al-Rifa'iyya* in Johannesburg:

A *Ratib* sodality led by Imam Gafieluddin Abrams, of 18 Magaliesberg Road, Bosmont, a suburb in the city of Johannesburg, exists from the 1940's. The Imam has been performing the ritual since he was twelve years of age. His shaikh was Gatiep Schroeder who lived in Albertsville. For the past 29 years he is the Imam of the Bosmont Mosque. Since Bosmont is a modest suburb where the poorer class of people live, he receives very little salary. In any case he could not claim a salary, as he considers it to be a religious obligation to lead the formal prayers, for which no fees may be charged, and to serve the community in birth rites, and of naming of the child, marriage ceremonies, and funeral services *pro deo*.¹⁵² He also assists the sick and comforts the dying. He has very little time left to conduct a healing practice, but may do so when called upon. The Imam is now ailing with Rheumatic arthritis, he is 62 years old, yet has a sonorous and lilting style of recitation which is acclaimed by all.

His congregation hold regular *Milads* (celebration of the Prophet's birthday) and many devotional *rawatib* are held by his flock at their homes, as a weekly ritual. Ladies also attend these functions, and indeed play a major role in *rampie-sny*, which is similar to that held in Cape Town. The Imam was born in Johannesburg in Vrededorp, a suburb from which the Indians and Malays were forcibly removed under the notorious Group Areas Act, which compelled him to settle in Bosmont. His present '*ratib jamah*' consists of about twenty devotees, which varies around this number, as some leave and new ones join. There are about four other groups which perform the *Ratib* in Johannesburg, in Eldorado Park, Riverlea and Lenasia.

My first attendance of the *Ratib* under Shaikh Abrams was at the Rand Easter Show Grounds, (now part of the University of Witwatersrand campus) during the 'Shades of the East Festival' in 1983, which was videoed by Saloojees Bookshop, and a talk was given by the author. One of the features presented at this exposition was a fire display which is not usually done. A scarf was exposed to a burning torch but did not catch alight.

¹⁵²When a child is born, the call to prayer, the *Adhan* and *Iqamat* has to be called into each ear respectively. McClain observes that the recital, augments the 'opening up of neural circuits in the child. From a biochemical view, it may lessen pain, by generating opioids.

At the moment, Imam Abram's troupe is the only group which includes fire in their repertoire. One of the elders, Shaik Yusuf Harman was the acknowledged 'master' of fire and had 'triumphed over it, because he is engrossed continually with a verse in the Qur'an which was an imperative from Allah to the fire: 'O Fire! Be cool and provide safety to Abraham.' He had 'mastered' or 'possessed' this verse since he reads it frequently throughout the day and has done so for many years. When questioned about the origin or reason for this item, Shaikh Gafiieldine related that the *Rifa'iyya* were always adepts of fire eating, walking, and even biting off the heads of live snakes and other bizarre behaviour. Once the Prophet wiped the sweat off his face, and when the kerchief was tossed into a nearby fire, it did not burn. The light 'nur' of the Prophet was greater than any fire and therefore the handkerchief could not be set alight. The invocation provides *barakah* which protects the cloth. Du Plessis also mentions a similar fire display. He states that it is no longer practised, and relates that molten chains were suspended from an overhanging beam, which the devotees caressed and from which they did not suffer any ill-effects.¹⁵³

On the night of the 12th February 1996, I was invited to attend a performance which had drawn the attention of the SABC TV producer, Pieter de Vos, and was screened on Channel TV2 on the 5th of March 1996.¹⁵⁴ The anchor-lady Patricia Glynn, intrigued by the performance of small children, the youngest being six years of age, and ranging in age from eight years to ten posed the questions: Are the children aware of belief and do they indulge in ascetic practices to achieve a high spiritual state? She was referred to the author by Imam Gafiieldien for an 'academic' answer. The troupe consisted of about twenty devotees, and the ceremony was held at the Bosmont Madressa Hall on the 12th February 1996 after the night prayers at 9 pm.

It was a large, sparsely decorated hall, spartan in appearance, with peeling cream paint, flanked on either side by windows stretching along the whole length of the walls. It was drizzling and chilly, yet there was an air of expectation and joy de vivre. The

¹⁵³ I. D. du Plessis, *The Cape Malays* (CapeTown: Balkema, 1972), 25. Eliade remarks that fire displays are rare, as there 'is a decadence of shamanism'. Eliade, *Shamanism*, 112.

¹⁵⁴ A similar programme was aired on Channel 2 SABC TV on the 12th June 1997, under Imam Harman.

lighting was dim, but the stage had several fluorescent lights stuck into the ceiling. A red curtain spanned three sides of the stage, leaving the front open. Several rows of chairs were placed some three metres away from the stage for the audience. In the first row were seated members, parents and the television team. The stage was a raised space of 6 metres by 8 metres, covered in green carpet. In the centre was *die bank* akin to a tall towel rack two metres high by one metre wide. It was painted a cream colour. At either side were two pillars across which were strung two arched lintels inscribed with the Attestation of Islam, the *Shahadah* in black paint. At table height were several rows of shelves. These held the swords ranging in size from two feet to four feet. Four flags were suspended from the top corners of this stand, which were sanctified by incense being wafted over them accompanied by a prayer.

The topmost flag on the left was black in colour and underneath it was a white flag. On the right hand corner a red flag was suspended above a green flag. On each flag the sacred names of Allah, or the saints were embroidered. The Black flag was that of Abbas, the standard bearer of the Prophet, ^(S.A.W.) or more probably of the Prophet's son-in-law, Ali ^(S.A.W.) who held the flag on the attack of the Khaibar Fort in Medina. The Prophet ^(S.A.W.) had invoked upon a flag, black in colour, and prayed for success, as the Khaibar fort was impregnable.¹⁵⁵ The green flag is that of the Qaderiyya Order and the red signifying the martyrdom of Hussein, the white of Muhammad himself. ^(S.A.W.) The absence of a blue flag denotes an Arabian influence.¹⁵⁶

The performance commenced with the lighting of the incense in brass bowls.¹⁵⁷ The imam bathed every instrument, reciting a just barely audible prayer, to sanctify

¹⁵⁵ The Muslim strategy of isolating the fort to cut of its water supply failed, as it was provisioned by a secret underground tunnel. No one could attack the robust entry gates and the Prophet spent the whole night in prayer for succour. See Martin Lings, *Muhammad* (Vermont: Inner Traditions. 1991), 266.

¹⁵⁶ Desai mentions a blue flag used by the *Yusufiyya Jamat* in Cape Town. The Blue colour is attributed to the *Sufis*, who were called 'the wearers of blue' in Persia, *azraq-posh*. It is the colour of mourning, for their exile to this world. The blue colour is also attributed to the *Subrawardi* School, which cultivated visionary appearances (entoptics). W. M. Thackston, (trans). *The Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Shihabuddin Yahya Subrawardi* (London: Octagon Press. 1982), 109.

¹⁵⁷ 'Fumigations' have been long utilised by the shamans as described by Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. Rev. ed. (London: Arcana 1989), 183.

them: Salutations be to you *Hadhrat Maulana Karamatu al-Sultan. Ya Sayyid Abdal Qadir Jilani*'.¹⁵⁸ The flags on the left similarly invoked the founder of the order: Ahmed al-Kabir al- Rifa'i.¹⁵⁹ On either side of the stage sat about ten disciples, in two parallel lines, to the right and left of centre stage, with tambourines in their hands, about 25cm in diameter, also termed *dairas*. (Ar. Circles) Constructed of hide, stretched over wooden or steel frames these need special care. Heating them before the ritual, aids in the performance. In the front row on either side were the two large *nagara* (Ar. drums), with hide on top and bottom, large enough to be straddled by a participant.

There was a hush as the shaikh and three elders took up their seats behind the instrument holder *die bank*.¹⁶⁰ Each opened his prayer manual and offered a silent prayer. Incense swirled slowly up from the small bowls which were on the table behind the 'bank'. A hush descended upon the audience in expectation. The performance commenced with the Shaykh reciting in a mellifluous voice, the *Ta'wuz*, the *Tasmiya*, the *Fatiha*, the *Tasliya*, which is a cardinal feature of the ritual, interspersed with verses from the Quran, eulogies to the founder of the *Qadiri* order, Abdal Qadir Jilani. The group joined in, replying to the shaikh in a chorus. The *wakalat* (total dependence) was recited: 'Our *Rabb*, on You we put our trust, and to You alone we turn (submit, repent) and to You is the journeying.'¹⁶¹ The sound floated across the hall and penetrated into our inner depths. Gradually the chorus increased in intensity. Sweat began to roll over the brows of the reciters. We could feel the heat and the intake of breaths. Suddenly the big drums burst out: Duff-duff duf duff-duff, and the tambourines joined in a rhythm followed by the chanting. The sounds rose over the stage and seemed to spread over

¹⁵⁸ *Hadhrat* (lit : presence) is a honorific title to those who have experienced the theophany.

¹⁵⁹ The invocations are reproduced on page 86 of the Shaykh's handwritten Prayer Manual. We have the Texts of the three groups: The Mafeking, Shaikh Gafieldin, and of Shaikh Logday, as well as those recited in Bagdad.

¹⁶⁰ '*Die bank*' which also has seven or more notches, could be analogous to the 'ladder' described by Mircea Eliade, 'for the spiritual ascent of the shaman'. Eliade, *Shamanism*, 487. However, in Iran, during the *Zurkhaneh* ritual, it was explained as a 'portal' not for ascent but descent of a 'sacred presence'. (*sakinah*). This is discussed below in the Chapter on Analysis within Qur'anic semantics.

¹⁶¹ Qur'anic verse: *Surah Mumtahinah* 60:4.

the huge empty space of the hall. The air stood still, electrifying and heavy.

Act One:

After five minutes, two small children were given the *tamboesters* (daggers) which were blessed by the Shaykh, and they were granted the *ijaza* (permission) to start the first Act of Stabbing. They came forward on to a proscenium, each hand grasping a dagger, about 25cm long, sharpened to a point. They looked intently at each other, seemingly taunting each other, sizing each other up, and suddenly stabbed themselves in the centre of the abdomen. Each strike coincided with a drum beat. It seemed as if their stomach muscles tensed and prevented the dagger from making any impression on them. A smile flitted across their lips in the joy of being able to demonstrate their spiritual prowess. This to-and-fro movement, going round in circles, stabbing each other, smiling and daring each other, with glinting eyes intrigued the audience. The dance movements have been notated by Desai. At each change of act, the *Tasliya* was recited, and the chorus followed in the invocation. The *asma ul Husna* (the most beautiful Names of the Divinity) commonly regarded as ninety-nine were interspersed. A poem, the *Qasida* of the Order was intoned, eulogising the founder Ahmed al Kabir al Rifa'i.

Act Two is an act with the *Alwans*, long awls with a large knob serving as a handle. Again two different youth stood up, they touched the flags with the instruments, they turned to the shaikh, who momentarily touched them and recited a prayer over them. The shaikh then signalled to them to proceed. The actions were similar to that of the children, only more frenzied, and the drums beat louder and the voices rose to a crescendo, leading to Act three, an act with *sale* (swords) after five minutes of the above. Each instrument was sacralised, and *ijaza* granted. The youths slashed at their forearms, attempting to stab the *rectus abdomini* muscles, but there was no penetration nor bleeding. After five minutes, erythema of the skin was noticed. One of them started to bleed a little which was stemmed by spittle from the shaikh, who applied it over the wound and smoothed it over the area of redness. One of the elders who was seated behind the bench, rose up and came forward. He began to slash his midarms, then across his stomach, and then came the moment which drew gasps from the audience. Part of the audience covered their eyes. Protruding his tongue he began to work the

sword across it. After a while the tongue started to ooze blood, which he wiped with a white handkerchief, and proceed to attack the tongue with even more vigour. He wiped his tongue with a white handkerchief and opened it out to show the blood. It was clear that blood was being drawn by the sword. He informed us later that he could cause bleeding at will and could also stop the haemorrhage at will, by reciting different 'mantra'. An intermission was called, and the shaikh invited us to his office for tea.

The devotees sat on the stage and were being interviewed by Patricia Glynn. She enquired about their experiences, their ages, their jobs. They replied that it was their degree of faith that enabled them to perform. This was affirmed by Imam Abrahams. Whilst having tea, I asked the Imam for his prayer manual, a request that had been repeated for many years almost at every opportunity that I had met the Imam socially, but had not been granted. Tonight he surprised me by simply closing it and with a gesture of magnanimity readily handing it across the table to me. Considerably elated by this token of acceptance, since the *kitab* is meticulously guarded and given only to initiates, I looked forward to the next Act, which I was assured would be more intense. Act Four is the Table Act when the devotee lies on a table. The second session commenced with the recitals and drumming again. A table was brought out, one of the young disciples was laid on it, with his stomach and chest exposed. The elderly *khalifa* called Yusuf Harman, made rapid cutting movements across the stomach, applying pressure, to convince us that the sword was indeed impotent in affecting the skin, since it hardly made any impression on the skin.

Act Five is the *Rabbana* Act with skewers. The entire performance now increased in intensity, with skewers being pierced through the eyelids, the cheeks, and across the chest of the disciple and left hanging there, with not a drop of bleeding. Imam Abrams then hammered an *alwan* with a large wooden handle, piercing the interior of the cheek, and stuck the sharp instrument into a block of wood about 10 cm square. Again the youth struck themselves across the arms with a ferocity more intense than ever before, rolling the swords across their tongues, and stabbing themselves in the stomach. On this occasion the Imam did not perform a fire display. The ceremony ended with the audience and the participants rising for the *salawat* to the Prophet. Some of us in the audience breathed a sigh of relief that the tension filled moments were over. The

devotees were hot and flustered, and equally exuberant at the termination of an awe-inspiring event in their lives.

The rain had stopped, and a bright moon appeared through the dispersing clouds. The air was pure and fresh. The Shaikh remarked that just as the moon reflects the light of the sun, so do the mystics reflect the 'enlightenment' and spiritual power of the *awliya*, the long chain of sacred persons who have a link with the Source of all sources.

We had witnessed a 'spiritual concert', an expression of the piety of the poor.¹⁶² The ritual had empowered and inspired them. Tomorrow it was back to the 'salt mines', the lot of the worker. We greeted the ailing Shaikh with a final embrace who wished us a safe journey.

The *Ratib* at Strandfontein, Cape Town

* Accompanied by Dr Abdulkader Tayob of the Department of Religious Studies we attended a performance held at the Strandfontein Mosque complex on the 22 July 1996. This 59 year old semi-retired Builder has been participating in the *Ratib* since his youth. In 1960, due to a concerted campaign conducted in the mosques against the *Ratib*, he abandoned it. His whole family had been taking part in the *Ratib* and originally were attached to Khalifa Abdalla who lived in Upper Wynburg, Cape Town. Recently, he had realised that it was dying out and needed to be revived, since it had played a major role in engaging the youth in spiritual matters and devotionism. Today there are more than six '*jamats*' performing the *Ratib*, namely those of Grassy Park, Mitchells Plain and Mannenburg, and one of them, the Heideveld, has over a hundred experienced performers.

The name *Ratib al-Haddad*, owes its origin to a shopkeeper, who was famed for sharpening swords, by merely passing his hand over the blade, without using the blacksmith's fire. He had discovered a certain composition which empowered him to achieve superior abilities with iron.¹⁶³ The Prophet Ibrahim (on whom be Peace) was

¹⁶² Osman bin Bakar, 'Sufism in the Malay-Indonesian World' in *Islamic Spirituality*. Vol. 2 (London: SCM Press, 1991), 278.

¹⁶³ Compare Schimmel's ascription of the eponym *al-Haddad*: 'One day he was sitting in (continued...)

also protected from burning in the oven of Pharoah. (Qur'an 21:69) The verse states that Allah commanded the fire: 'O Fire! Be cool and pleasant to Ibrahim'. The sacraments consisted of the instruments or *pravoës*, *Miyang*, or incense, *Loban*, and Sandalwood. *Tamboesters*, a corruption of the word *Dabbus*, a dagger, is a sharp pointed awl with a very large handle. *Sale* plural of *Saal* for *saif* (Ar.) a curved sword half a metre long, sharp along one edge. *Rabanas*, or Tambourines, with jingles (castanets) along the edges. Shahaheb calls them *daira* (Ar. Circles). His instruments are made in India from *halal* animal skin, purified by ritual slaughter of the animals, which he believes helps the instruments to emit a more efficacious sound.

According to one of the *mureed*-sons of Shahaheb, Asif Logday, it is the *nagara*, the large drum which emits the loudest sound and which sets the pace, which is the main element of the phenomenon.¹⁶⁴ Others said it was the *dhikr*, its cantillation and intonation which transported them into another dimension. *Alwaans* are 30cm long skewers, sharp at one end, and having a half-moon or circular handle on the other. Some of the skewer handles are inscribed with the credo. Shahaheb calls them *guruz*, Persian for dagger.

The 'bank' is a 2 pillared lintel, with the inscription of the credo in Arabic, *La ilaha illallah* in the centre. *Ya Allah* is inscribed in one corner, and *Ya madat*, which should be *madad* as the root verb is *m-d-d*, O! Helper, one of the Sacred Names of Allah, on the other. It has holes in the side to hold several flags of varying hues, and in front, there are spaces for the awls (skewers 30 cm long). Above these were arranged the various swords, in ascending size from 60 cms to 110 cms. Imam Abrams had seven notches in his 'bank', analogous of the rungs of the ladder of the Dinka.

Shahaheb had no 'bank' but a *sundug* or chest storing all the instruments, and had various flags draped around the *takiya* or 'stage' where the performance takes place. These flags were in various colours: *'alams* (Ar. Flags). The yellow for the

(...continued)

his shop listening to a blind man who was reciting the Koran in the bazaar. He became so absorbed in listening that he put his hand into the fire, and without using the pincers, drew out a piece of molten iron from the furnace'. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 180.

¹⁶⁴ Asif was tragically killed in his shop during gang-violence which plagues the area where his shop is situated. His death grieved the whole community.

Chistiyya Order, the paler yellow for the Naqsbandiyya and the green for the Qaderiyya.¹⁶⁵ On the other side were flags of the Abbasi and also the *Alawiyya*, the black of Ali and the red for his martyred son, Hussain.

The *niyyah* or intention to perform the ritual is made after a two-*rakat* (2 bow) formal prayer. All the instruments have to be 'oekered', with the incense, i.e. bathed in the incense to purify them. All the participants have to be ritually pure, i.e. performing the ritual washing of the body, before entering the performance. One of the Imams interviewed, Imam Martins of Belgravia, said this was the most important preparation, which he supervised personally, as an improper ablution could result in injury. Imam Abdul Jabbar said that ones' '*iman*' must be firm and committed and that the disciple (*murid*) should have complete trust in the *Khalifa*, the Guide in leading the group through the ritual.

The late son of Shasaheb, Asif showed me the scar on the tip of his finger which was pierced as he was washing a sword. He bled profusely, and was reprimanded that he should have been in a state of ritual purity before he could handle the instruments. He also sustained a 20cm fine vertical scar stretching over his sternum from the second rib to the last rib. This abrasion was caused as the sword was repeatedly moved in a slicing motion. Saliva was applied, some prayers said and a white powder was rubbed which was later explained to me was ash of the burned incense. The eldest son Mehboob however, said that he did not have the 'heart' to undertake the *Ratib* exercises, as he dreaded the sight of blood, and described how he was unable to hold a fowl for his father during a ritual slaughter, and both were spattered with blood. The fowl could not be cooked as it had died from an incomplete ritual. The laws are very strict, and sometimes his father will point out a certain area of the audience where someone is ritually impure and therefore 'interferes' with the ritual.

Ratib literally means 'an arrangement' consisting of *salawat*, (Blessings to the prophet), ^(سأوى) Verses from the Qur'an, the Credo, *tahlil*, and *Munajat*, pleas to various saints, usually to those belonging to the spiritual order with eulogies to them. It varies from group to group, and different compositions are used on different occasions. The

¹⁶⁵The green colour is mentioned in the Surah *Kahf* v.30 where the elite will be clothed in garments of green silk.

recital does not have a fixed form. It is entirely dependant on the choice of the *Khalifa* and Shahsaheb insisted that the cardinal feature of the rite is the *salawat* or Blessings to the Prophet Muhammad. The various groups have different versions of the recital. Verses from the Qur'an, of which the *Surah al-Fatihah* is the most iterated together with the *tahlil*. Eulogies to the spiritual masters, from the four *khulafa*, the four Righteous Caliphs or successors to the Prophet, to Abdul Qadir Jilani, the *sultan al awliya*, the King of the Friends of Allah proceeding through the chain of successors to the present office bearers of the spiritual Order, some of whom may be deceased. The Prophet is called the *sultan an-anbiya*, a completely superior lineage than the antecedent Prophets, such as Moses or Jesus whom Muslims have to revere.

The text of the *Ratib*

From the only authoritative work obtained from Iraq, the composition of the recital is as follows with the number of iterations in parenthesis:

The *Fatihah* once, followed by *istigfar* (3), *tahlil* (100), *salawat* (10), *Surah ad-Duha* (*Surah* 93) (3) followed by *Surah an-Nasr* (*Surah* 110) (3) *tasmiya* (10), *du'a* (once) *du'a* (3), An '*ayat*, Qur'anic verse (3), *Dhikr* (4), *madih* (poetry) (once) followed by numerous of the *asthma ul husna*. The recital ends with a *Fatihah*, the epiclesis and conclusion of any Muslim rite, followed by a *salawat* with a final recital of a *Qasidatul Rifa'iyya*.

This composition is mentioned by Allamah as-Sayed Mahmud Shukri al Alusi in his book: *Secrets of the People of the Rifa'iyya* which is commentary on the *Qasidatul Rifa'iyya*.

The other *rawatib*, (pl. of *ratib*) are all related, have a similar composition but the Rifa'iyyah had added on the eulogies to Ahmed al-Rifa'i al-kabir, the spiritual founder.

According to Imam Abdullah Jabbar, very seldom do any of his disciples go into a trance. When they do so, it is called '*tariqat*'. The *murid* then withdraws from the performance and sits in the wings of the stage till he recovers. He also does not describe any of the prodromata of entoptics reported during Hindu or Bushman trances. This is probably due to 'entrainment'. Sometimes, he said he feels a warm feeling or his *ruh* (soul) rising up from his feet, going up through his trunk, sometimes he has a feeling of elation or excitement before he starts to do the actual act of piercing. During

the *tahlili* trance, one's words gradually fade away to be replaced by the heart continuing the prayer on its own, which the adept could hear. His reason for performing the ritual in the present time was that the *Ratib* was mainly for its social benefits. 'No longer do the youth form gangs and loiter in the streets. They are just too keen to perform the *Ratib* because it gives them a sense of power, of elation and a companionship holding superior values'. For this reason alone, the Imam feels that the *Ratib* should be encouraged. He tells of instances when a lady, injured and bleeding in an accident ~~were~~^{was} saved, by the Imam, who prayed and touched the spot to stop bleeding, and focussing on me, said 'that you should learn this technique to help your patients'. The imams are often called to stop bleeding which needs a special prayer.

The elderly Imam Ahmed, *doyen* of exponents of the *Ratib* lives at 74 Vlamboom Street, Bonteheuwel. He was interviewed on the 21-07-96 at his home. Imam Ahmed has the distinction of being the oldest practitioner and teacher of the *Ratib* at the Cape. He is nearly eighty years old. He remembers being interviewed by Dr I. D. du Plessis at a time when he was the main exponent in Cape Town. Two years ago he went to Malaysia to study the *Ratib* in its finer aspects. Deep in the countryside, when he stopped to have a meal at a roadside café, he was served the food on large plantain leaves. The owner, asked his name, and when he replied Ahmed, was shocked when he was informed of the names of his father and grandfather. The man gave him a mixture (fruit juice) to drink. He felt hot in his stomach, which radiated to the back and into his chest. He then felt as if had drunk a tonic potion, because a strength came into his body. When he had returned to South Africa, and went for his monthly check, he was told by his doctor that he no longer had 'sugar' and did not need his 'diabetes medication'. He has remained well since then, and no longer feels weak and tired. He looked well. He has taught the *Ratib* to many disciples. We also met him at Strandfontein on the 5th July, 1996 with Dr Abdulkader Tayob.

At Strandfontein, one of the nights' highlights of the performance, was when he repeatedly passed the sharp, heavy dagger across his tongue, without suffering any harm. He also frenziedly hit his forearms with a sword, which only resulted in skin abrasions, and very slight oozing of blood, insufficient to soil his shirt. He has promised a more detailed interview on my next visit. His response to the questions which covered

prodromal consciousness, ineffability, entoptics, flashes of light and colours, relaxation after the ritual and *post actum* well being were informed. He is not aware of his surrounding during the trance, sees no colours or lights, but experiences heat *tapas* rising from his stomach to indicate the 'presence of the other' which protects him from harm. There is no defect in his memory and he remains fully conscious and sees everything brighter and clearer. This phenomenon is evidence of enhanced perception.

Imam Shah Ali Logday, also known as Shah Sayed Ali Akbar, and by his disciples as Shahsaheb, of 13 Cissy Gool Avenue, Rylands, whom I visited on Monday 15-07-1996 at his home is also a renowned proponent. Just two days ago having returned from overseas, and upon learning of my research project, was pleased to present me with the Urdu Kitab *Gunche e Rifa'iyah* (Rosebuds of the *Rifa'iyah*) which gives a history of the Order. The book was printed in Karachi Pakistan. He had gone to a *dargah* (shrine) of one of the saints, and requested a copy of this brochure, which gives the history of the *Rifa'iyah* and the biography of the spiritual master Shaikh Ahmed al-Kabir. According to him, there was a miraculous element in his asking for another copy. He was brought two more, and on attempting to return the extra one was told to take it as well, which he accepted. He remarked that this extra copy was given to him by the attendant of the shrine, and it was certainly intended for me, as I had come all the way from Johannesburg to ask for such a publication, and that too soon after his return from oversea.

I was invited for lunch with him on Friday 19-07-1996 and was shown a video of a performance. This performance is much more intense than those done by the 'Malays', the indigenous early Muslims classified such by the previous regime, in that the recitals include snatches of Urdu poetry, eulogies to the Prophet, and also Qur'anic verses.

I attended a performance on the 17th November 1996 held at his *astana* at 3pm which was part of the *agyarwin sharif*, a ceremony to commemorate the death anniversary of a saint of the Indian subcontinent, Shah Moinuddin Chisti, followed by a *Ratib* performance and *Niyyaz*, (food offered in the name of a sacred person).¹⁶⁶ The audience comprising more than two hundred people partook of a meal. The courses of

¹⁶⁶James Vernon Schubel, *Performance and Drama*, 66.

the meal which consisted of a curried rice dish with mutton, included mixed vegetables and a fruit desert with orange juice followed by tea. This has analogy to the *Slametan* where food is served, or the other devotional *rawatib* when *niyyaz*, (parcels of food, fruit or sweetmeats) are distributed to every participant and which are believed to be endowed with *barakah* (plenitude).¹⁶⁷ The spiritual allegiance determines the textual aspects of the invocations rendered during the ceremony. There were frequent invocations to Abdul Qaderi Jilani because Shahsaheb also belongs to the *Qadiri silsila* (mystical order). Shahsaheb has not performed the *Ratib* himself, but has acted as the *murshid* or imam for over two decades. He had achieved his spiritual status in India, under Shah Ghazi saheb. He said that what brought the *baraka* or power, was the presence of the *shaikh*, that one had to achieve a status of *fana fil shaikh* which then enabled one to achieve power. The *shaikh* was present spiritually guiding and protecting the performer. We saw a performance on video of his group in his *astana*, prayer room at home, where the devotees pierced themselves right through the body. However, he had placed a sheet over them to prevent agitation amongst the audience, who often fainted, needed assistance and disrupted the ceremony.

At a performance on the 17th November, 1996, to which I was especially invited, the stage in the *astana* consisted of white sheets spread on the ground, cushioned by blankets, and alongside the *qiblah* end, was a raised seat on which were placed the various paraphernalia of the ritual, the swords, the skewers, the *kitab*s (prayer manuals) incense holders, surrounded by flags around the room, in various colours embroidered with invocations. The *Khalifa* or Preceptor Shahsaheb sat on the platform, whilst the performers sat cross-legged on the stage, and on the periphery sat the crowd of squeezed spectators, all sitting on their haunches or in any similar comfortable position.

After a commencement prayer (*al-fatihah*) of glorification to Allah and praises blessings *Salawat*, to the Prophet Muhammad and the Spiritual Head, the group began to chant the *tahlil*, and the *salawat*. After some time, the drums were suddenly erupted

¹⁶⁷The distinction between Dramatic and Household *ratibs* is that in the former, the invocations are presented as drama, with a distinction between audience and performers, whilst the latter do not distinguish between the two, and the whole *jamat* (congregation) participates in the ritual.

in harmony with the recital, and after a nod from the spiritual director, the performers then stood up holding the awls pointing downwards at an angle, directed towards their abdomens. The jerking movements were very similar to those done by about 150 participants in a *hadhra* at Gatesville on the 23-11-96 after 'Esha' lasting from 10pm to 2am.

The *hadra* can be regarded as a precursor of the whirling dervish performances because it consists of a congregational recital of various *dhikr*. The participants initially stood in a circle, holding hands, but undid these when the swaying movements increased with time. The heads are slanted forwards, then raised back, with the chest protruded and sharply bent again. In the *hadra*, these motions are accompanied by chanting, and exhaling of the breath, whilst in the *Ratib*, the performer remains silent, and as the tempo increases, they stab themselves with increasing ferocity. The prayer during the initial stages is that of the saman, *Antal Hadi, Antal Haqq, Laysal Hadi, illahu*. Every second syllable was accented, (the words, *Hadi, Haqq, Hadi and Hu*) rose in crescendo, accompanied by stabbing gestures with the daggers thudding into the abdomen. After a while the *nagarah* (large drum) began to beat in accompaniment, and the stabbing motions increased in tempo. The tambourines began to beat with increasing pace.

A participant nearest to the observer was seen to shiver and sweat, with a ripple going through his gluteal muscles extending to the back along the latissimus dorsi muscle, he had a medial squint, (both eyes pointing to the nose) and was breathing heavily. He then got up, walked to centre stage and attempted to slash his forearm with a long thin sword. But the sword had no effect at all. He tried this also to his arms, hitting them with hard blows, but the swords, which I had verified before to be sharp, did not cut at all. The motions only caused a redness (erythema) of the skin, and a slight scuffing (abrasion). He then sat on the ground with tip of the sword into his suprasternal notch (below the larynx) and leaned heavily forward, but the tip would not penetrate.¹⁶⁸

He was then covered with a sheet, whilst squatting on the ground, and after a

¹⁶⁸Professor Lynn Gillis maintains that the sword blows are skilfully struck on soft portions of the body, with care being taken that it does not strike bony parts, in order to avoid a laceration. The sword point did not enter the suprasternal notch, an area where there are no muscles to ward off the tip of the blade. The fact that the tongue is pierced without bleeding enables us to elicit that the display is neither feigned nor dependant on skill. Playing with fire is neither deception nor an illusion. Desai, *Ratib as Artform*, 234.

few moments, the sword pierced right through his sternum, emerging from the spine. There is no doubt that the sword had pierced the chest and emerged right out at the back. When this occurred, the devotee let out a shriek, made facial grimaces, had a upturned eyes, and seemed to be unaware of the audience. With a sharp movement an assistant pulled out the sword. The devotee emitted shrieks and collapsed. This was a terrifying moment. Had he been injured and on the point of collapse? His eyes pulled up and he appeared to be in extremis and to have lost consciousness. He collapsed to the ground, and fumbled for the shaikh's cloak. The shaikh reached out to him and holding his hand in both hands, consoled him by stroking his arm, reading a silent prayer. After a few minutes, the adept awoke from his trance, blinked and resumed his place amongst the performers.

It is clear that some *Ratib* performers were more knowledgeable about the theoretical aspects, than others. I selected Shahsaheb as I found him to be most articulate, communicative and literate as well. He had written his own Prayer Manual, and was well informed about the theoretical and historical aspects of the *Ratib*. As he belonged to several mystical orders, such as the *Chistiyya*, the *Qadiriya*, the *Nizami* besides the *Rifa'iyyah*, he could point out deviations and distinctions between the various prayers. The outstanding *darjah* (spiritual status) of Shahsaheb was that he did not do the *Ratib* himself, but had achieved the piety and was granted the spiritual status. Autodidactism is not permissible, since there are dangers in following the spiritual path on one's own, one of them being one of irreversible mental 'dissociation'.¹⁶⁹

Ratib means literally 'an arrangement of verses' and varies not only in the different orders, but also between different groups in the same town, and strictly speaking refers to the recital rather than the performance. This was a phenomenon remarked upon by Schubel in his observations on performances of the mourning flagellations of the *ta'ziyyah* ritual, where the word denotes a recital rather than the

¹⁶⁹This has been observed and commented upon by several authors, Titus Burkhardt, Stanley Lane-Poole as well as Sayyed Huseyn Nasr in his various works. Such individuals are called *majdhub*, 'permanently intoxicated' by remaining in a 'spiritual state'. This is not to be conflated with *majnun*, as discussed by Dols (1992) in his magnum Opus on Sacred forms of madness. W. M. Dols, *al-Majnun* (London: Oxford University Press, 1992)

performance. In Pakistan the word connotes the models that are paraded, whilst in Iran it refers to the ceremony itself. In Arabic the word means 'to show sympathy with the bereaved'. Mourning in a sense of external grieving is not permitted in Islam. One has to submit to the Divine will.

There has always been suspicion of 'outsiders' wanting information about the *Ratib* and the devotees only do so after seeking permission of their Shaikh. At the end of the day, three flags were raised outside the *astana*, two of differing yellow tones, and one in green, which symbolised the Indian sodalities of the *Qadiri*, *Naqsbandiya* and *Chistiyya*.¹⁷⁰ These were raised by an Imam of the Gatesville Mosque, Shaikh Sa'adullah Khan, Dr Yusuf da Costa and myself, under guidance of Shahsaheb, who recited a long invocation pledging affiliation to the Master, and ended with a *Fatiha* and *Tasliya (salawat)*.¹⁷¹

Anthropologists have shown an enduring and sedulous interest in rituals presented as drama, notably Victor Turner, (1974) Firth, Fernandez and Schechner (1985) 'and terms such as drama, dramatisation and dramatism have been used metaphorically to express the bigger than life texture of social action involving role play, conflict and transformation within the fabric of social life'.¹⁷² The Khoisan Trance rituals were employed mainly for healing. Muslim and Hindu trance rituals also have healing and an apotropaic function, utilised for exorcism but the Hindu ritual is rather more propitiary, because the Hindu believe the goddess is responsible for both illness and

¹⁷⁰The origin of the flags is twofold: Richard Burton in 1850 'told of a hundred large trees in Sind bearing the name of Jilani. These trees became the foci of cult practices; each had a pole and a flag hung on to it to fulfill a vow made to gain the saint's intercession. The fruit and leaves were sacrosanct, and under them sweetmeats were distributed to the poor'. 'Sufism' in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. (ed) Eliade, Vol. 14:347 See also Rudolf Kriss & Hubert Kriss-Heinrich, *Volks Glaube in Bereich des Islams* 2 vols. (Wiesbaden: 1960/1.) The other reason is the *Sunnah* where standards of various hues, black in the case of the attack on the Jewish fort of Khaibar, were used in battles fought by the Prophet. The flags maintained by Shayk Logday are of Indian origin. (S.A.K.)

¹⁷¹Constance E. Padwick, *Muslim Devotions* (London: SPCK. 1960).

¹⁷²Laughlin et al., *Brain, Symbol*, 212.

cure.¹⁷³

What is common in all these traditions is the inculcation of trance, and since neither mantra or *Shath* make sense, there is a neurobiological explication for the trance.

- * Fatima Meer describes several cases of healing by the female *poosalie* temple attendant, and how carrying *kavadi* is a healing ceremony. Balakrishnan, an 11 year old child suffering from epilepsy (fits) did not have the courage to participate in the *Kavadi*.¹⁷⁴ The Draupadi Fire walking ceremony has a phenomenological equivalence with the Kung trance dance as well as the *Ratib* where molten chains are stroked with impunity. Schubel describes fire-walking during the *ta'ziyyah* rites.¹⁷⁵ Henning depicts a '*Muharram*' ritual in which Hindus and Christians participated in 1902 in Durban. The elaborate *ta'ziyyah* or sarcophagi can be clearly seen in the photograph.¹⁷⁶ Fatima Meer's work has a similar but more distinctive photograph dating to 1909 of a *ta'ziyyah* performed in Durban.¹⁷⁷

A comparison of trance rituals in South Africa amongst three disparate cultures establishes common features, and by the separation and relegation of phenomenology from eidetic intuition, contributes to a more reliable and more holistic hypothesis towards a neurobiopsychological explanation. Homologous phenomenology at once removes many problems, and points to a biological convergence, since the three groups studied hold varied cosmologies, follow disparate religious traditions, utilise different methods, sounds, diverse languages which result in varying interpretations and expressions of the trance ritual.

¹⁷³Georgina C. Buijs, 'An Analysis of some factors affecting Religious commitment in a South African community,' *Religion in Southern Africa* vol. 2, no. 2 (1981): 25-35. Her report about Hindu rituals being 'rejected by the younger generation, who turn for healing to the Pentecostal Church contrasts with the situation of the *Ratib*, where the youth feel empowered and because the imam of the *Ratib* is usually a teacher of the Qur'an, youth are increasingly turning to the 'power of Islam'.

* ¹⁷⁴Fatima Meer, *Portrait*, 150-155.

¹⁷⁵James Vernon Schubel, *Religious Performance in Contemporary Islam* (Columbia: University of South Carolina. 1993), 159.

¹⁷⁶Henning, *Indentured Indians*, 116.

¹⁷⁷Fatima Meer, *Portrait*, 207.

Mysticism is such a vital element in Islam, that without some understanding of its ideas and of the forms which they assume we should seek in vain to penetrate below the surface of Mohammedan religious life.

Reynold Nicholson.¹

Richard Martin urges the study of *Sufism*, 'which remains an important area for the student who wishes to grasp the variety of expressions within Islamic culture'.² Trimingham defines *Sufism* as 'the organised cultivation of religious experience aimed at direct perception of the Real...*Sufism* is a Way before it becomes a theosophy... and the doctrine is an attempt at rational expression of mystical experience'.³ These views are in sharp contrast with definitions from within the tradition. Hamid Algar notes that *Sufism* 'had a hidden and implicit existence in the Islamic revelation right from the beginning, and even when it became identifiable, and in some measure an autonomous mode of Islamic practice, its integration into the spiritual, intellectual, social and even political life of the community remained unmistakable'.⁴ The early Muslims practiced *tasawwuf* but did regard it as such.⁵ Later Muslims interpreted the mystical elements as *tasawwuf al Sunni* whilst interpreters such as Ibn Arabi spoke of a philosophical *Sufism*. In the earliest work by al-Qushayri *Sufism* is a state in 'which God causes you to die to yourself and live in Him'. A parallel occurs in the Khoisan, 'you have to die before you die', and is based on a *hadith*: *mutu qabla an tamut* which refers to the

¹ Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* Rev. ed. (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1967), vi.

² Richard Martin, *Islamic Studies* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1996), 239.

³ S. J. Trimingham, *Sufi Orders* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1971), 137.

⁴ al-Qushayri, *Principles of Sufism* trans. B.R. von Schlegell. (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1990), i. Introduction by Hamid Algar.

⁵ Al-Hujwiri, *Kashf al-Mahjub* trans R.A. Nicholson. (London: Luzac, 1967), 44. Cites Abu Hasan al-Fushanji who declared 'Today *Sufism* has a name without reality, but formerly it was a reality without a name.' Nicholson considers al-Hujwiri's text to be both earlier and more valuable as a source on *Sufism* than al-Qushayri.

sublimation of the conspicuous as well as sensory elements of human existence.

The practice of any ritual, either by mortification of the body, or by iteration of litanies for the inculcation of an 'experience' is prohibited by the *shari'ah*. Nicholson was castigated when he claimed that the aim of *Sufism* was unification. To make 'deification the end of *Sufism* is just like judging a city on the basis of its slums.'⁶ Martin Lings utilises the metaphor of an Ocean, and links it to consciousness which would be more in sympathy with our perspective of *Sufism* as the experiential dimension of Islam.⁷ Sirhindi regards *Sufism* as consisting of diverse aspects of love of the transcendent, and in the three majority schools in *Sufism* holding the doctrine of *fana'* and *baqa'*, the experience is regarded as *shuhudi* perceptual, rather than *wujudi* existential.⁸

The nexus between asceticism and mysticism in Islam

There are four apparently disparate themes about which misconceptions prevail *vis-a-vis Sufism*, Islam, asceticism and mysticism, which are in reality but differing expressions and degrees of piety, and there is a distinctive location of *Sufism* within Islam. Contrary to the suppositions of eminent western and Islamic scholars, *Sufism* is 'neither an extraneous growth owing little to the authoritative sources of Islam, nor a sectarian development that occurred at some point in Islamic history'⁹. It is integral and

⁶ Muhammad Abdul Haq Ansari, *Sufism and Shari'ah* (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1986), 58. The author cites Shaikh Baha al-din Naqsbandi as exhorting that 'one should not pursue *suluk* (a method, rituals) in order to get something over and above the beliefs and practices of the *Shari'ah*....The object of the Sufi *suluk* is not to view forms and images of transcendental realities, or behold colours and lights. In fact they are nothing more than play and fun....Forms, these or others, and lights, physical or spiritual, are all created by God. He transcends them all, and they are nothing but His signs and proofs'.

⁷ Martin Lings, *What is Sufism*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1975), 13.

⁸ Ansari, *Sufism and Shari'ah*, 55- 58. What the Sufi unites with is the shadow *zill* of God and not God. It is *ghair Allah*. (other than God). The minority school initiated by Abu Yazid of Bistam which believes in 'self-deification' is probably that of the Indo-Pakistan continent which reveals Vedantic influences. Zaehner's comparison is thus not approved of by those from within the tradition of *tasawwuf*. R.C. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* Rev. ed., (Oxford: One World, 1994), 110.

⁹ Hamid Algar in an Introduction to the translation of one of the earliest treatises on *Sufism* the *Risala* of al-Qushayri. Contemporary scholars such as Isma'il al-Faruqi cited in A.Tayob, *Islamic* (continued...)

very much a part of Islam since the first Revelation of the Qur'an itself, was a 'religious' experience.¹⁰ In the Qur'an, the encounter between Moses and God's servant, identified as al-Khidr, validates the special knowledge that the experientialists possess. The verse refers to 'one of Our servants whom We had taught knowledge peculiar to Us...(wa 'allamahum min ladunna 'ilman). This knowledge is considered by the *Sufis* to be the esoteric truth validating the exoteric law of Moses. Moses requests God's servant: 'May I follow you on the understanding that you teach me, from what you have been taught, a guidance *rushd*?¹¹

Origin of religious experience

(B.A.W.)
Muhammad's experience in the Cave of Hira where the first revelation occurred is apposite to the above, since the Revelation brought new knowledge which was later to be defined as Islam in subsequent revelations. The legal, theological and ethical constructs of Islam, were codified from the written text of the Qur'an, a century and more after Muhammad's death. (B.A.W.) Its social and moral structures were established after the *hijrah* in Madina, and his practices and life were enshrined in the *hadith*, which Marshall Hodgson prefers to term 'narrations' rather than the common appellation of traditions, that can be entirely secular.¹² The *hijra* meant more than a migration, it was a

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Resurgence in South Africa (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1996), 38 fn 6. 'al-Faruqi has probably made the strongest statement on the anathema of Islam to Sufism. Not all Islamists share his passion, but there is a widespread notion that some of the institutions of Sufism are responsible for much of the problems in Islamic societies.' It is the *qishri* 'ulama (so-called by S. H. Nasr as 'superficial scholastics') who have created tensions between the community, who practice *Sufi* rituals but condemn the 'arifin, the enlightened. In most cases this has a political basis. S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1964). They were executed more for political rather than theological reasons.

¹⁰The first revelation of the Qur'an as initiated with *surah* 'al-alaq which Asad renders as 'the germ-cell' was the imperative 'Read'! Some translators prefer the word 'recite' or 'proclaim' but Asad regards the word 'read' to mean a 'conscious taking in' or imbibing of the sacred word. Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*. (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980), 963.

¹¹ 18:65-6.

¹²S.H. Nasr is adamant that 'traditions' is to be preferred over narrations, since the former is etymologically connected to 'transmission of the knowledge, ideas, techniques, forms, laws and many other elements of a written or oral nature'. S.H. Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (New York:

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transposition from personal piety to societal responsibility for the perfection of a society, its manners and demeanour. Makkan Islam signified a personal linear relation between the Transcendent and the Prophet. This dimension in Madina, since it required societal responsibility for the deprived and disempowered as well, highlights Islam's distinctive feature amongst religions.

Fedwa Multi-Douglas validates that asceticism was a precursor of mysticism in Islam when it was termed *Zuhd*.¹³ The asceticism had to come prior to a religious experience. The first verses dealing with asceticism is from the earliest Makkan *Surahs*, The Enwrapped *al-Muzzamil* clearly speaks of the 'cloaked one', night vigils, recitations of the Qur'an, *dhikr* and *tabattil*, total devotion or submission as acts essential for ascetics.¹⁴ All religions have a dialectic with the transcendent, the sacred Other. Where they differ is the method or technique for achieving and developing the liaison between man and the sacred.¹⁵ The second *Surah* which is explicit on the 'spiritual Muhammad' is *al-Fath*, the Victory since it details the endowment of what Asad calls 'inner peace' *sakinah*, and verifies a dream of the Prophet prognosticating that it was indeed true and assuring the Prophet that he would enter Makkah as a conqueror and plenteous war gains, 'with shaven head'.¹⁶ Asceticism is clearly stated to be pluralistic, as seen in the prostration marks' of piety in the sister faiths of Islam, and the Prophet is assured that the latter would prevail over the former in spiritual

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SUNY, 1989), 65-67.

¹³Fedwa Malti-Douglas, "Gender and Uses of the Ascetic in an Islamist Text" in Valantasis (ed), *Asceticism*, 395-405.

¹⁴*Surah al-muzzamil* 73:1-10. Almost every verse has some element of asceticism. Contrary to the aspersion of the textualists that the rituals of *dhikr* are an innovation, the Prophet is enjoined 'whether by night or day, remember thy Sustainer's Name (*dhikr*) and devote thyself unto Him with utter devotion'. Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, 903.

¹⁵The term *taṣkiyah* is explicit of the process of purification as enunciated in *Surah Shams* 91:9 and *Surah al-Ala* 87:14: 'Those who purify themselves will achieve success.' This success refers to a spiritual dimension.

¹⁶Asad remarks that many pilgrims shave their hair before donning the *ihram* the vestment for the pilgrimage. Asad, *Message*, 790.

achievement.¹⁷ Asceticism is not the end, but only the means to an end which is 'essential' to all mysticism.¹⁸ The Qur'an is also the only Scripture containing a verse which guarantees that the *din* or way of Islam would prevail over all religions.¹⁹

Tasawwuf consists in elaborating techniques for strengthening the links between the human and the Divinity, and is a quest for *ridwan* pleasure of Allah as mentioned in verse 29. The 'technique' is based on the *hadith* concerning the most significant ritual of Islam, the *salat*, the five formal obligatory prayers: 'The *salat* is the *me'raj* of the *mu'min*', the prayer is the ascension of the Believer to the Sacred. There is a distinction between a *muslim* adhering to mere submission and the *mu'min*, the believer who affirms with his heart and mind. It is illustrated by the incident of new converts to Islam claiming an equal share in the booty with the *muhajirin*, the Emigrants who were the earlier Muslims. The *ansar* helpers were admonished by the Prophet following a Revelation in *Surah al Hujarat* 49: 14 which is explicit about the two types of belief, a superficial one of the tongue, and a committed one from the heart, the latter being professed by a *mu'min*.²⁰

A Religious experience of the Prophet witnessed by his Companions

The oft quoted incident from the *Hadith* of the Messenger enables a distinction to be made between the three 'stages' of piety. Whilst sitting with his companions the Prophet was approached by a young person, clad in pure white clothes, which made the companions wonder that a wayfarer could be so immaculately attired despite his journey in the dusty desert. The youth enquired from Muhammad about his

¹⁷ The word '*sakinah*' has also been rendered as 'tranquillity' but we discuss below that it refers to a *heirophany*, according to the *hadith*.

¹⁸ Zaehner, *Hindu Muslim Mysticism*, 5.

¹⁹ *Surah Fath*: verse 28 "it is He who sent his Messenger with Guidance and a way (*din*) which will prevail over all the 'ways' of mankind. And Allah testifies to it." G.M. Karim. 'Islam as a religion for the Milleninum' Crescent Seminar. Erasmia, 26-08-1998.

²⁰ 'The Bedouins say: 'We believe'. Say: You do not believe but you only say, 'We have submitted in Islam, for faith has not yet entered your hearts....' *Surah Hujurat* 48:49. In Makkah there was a linear relationship between the Prophet and God. After the *hijra*, it became trilinear, i.e. triangular, comprising God, man and Society. It was in Medina that the social relations and social rights were elaborated and codified. This is evident from the contents of the Medina and the Makkan *surahs*.

religion: What is *islam*, *iman* and *ihsan*? Upon Muhammad's reply that *islam* meant voluntary physical submission, that *iman* signifies 'inner faith' or Intellectual affirmation, and *ihsan* meant the achievement of perfect virtue or excellence in spiritual realisation, he answered: 'That is correct.' The questioner's response intrigued the Companions even more. If the answer was known, why was the question asked? Muhammad replied that the messenger was the angel Gabriel who had come to test Muhammad's appreciation of the higher dimensions of religion. The *hadith* differentiates between *Islam*, '*iman* and *ihsan*'.²¹ This is pointer to the distinction between the spiritual or experiential Muhammad compared to the prevailing historical Muhammad, and thus the historical expression is insufficiently informed by the spiritual, or the emotional, which is implicit in the *Hadith*.

These are the stages of penetration into a religion. Schimmel contrasts asceticism and mysticism. We contend that asceticism of the early Fathers was but an extreme form of piety which later progressed to an experiential mysticism.²² One of the earliest works on ascetic practices of the Companions and the Prophet, as well as those of his household, details over a thousand narrations on their extreme piety.²³

The requirements of *Sufism*

The requirements of *Sufism* are five in number: a guide, good company, penury, *rawatib* meetings, and a personal *wird* given to each individual initiate according to his spiritual capacity. A spiritual master is a *sine qua non*. Just as in the rabbinical texts, there is a saying that one who hopes to study spirituality alone will fall into error, the disciple needs an experienced traveller to guide him along paths that he is required to traverse, and save him from harm from incorrect use of the sacred word *dhikr* having

²¹ *Muhsinun* - 'doers of good' whereas it means 'those on a spiritual journey whose object is Allah, not even the coveted Paradise of the two lower spiritual classes, the *muslim* and the *mu'min*. A recent translation of the Qur'an from Saudi Arabia, following the *Wahabi* (puritanical) school and critical of any religious experiences, translates *Muhsinun* as 'good doers' for Allah's sake' (29:69). al-Hillali and Muhsin Khan, *The Noble Qur'an: English Translation and Commentary* (Riyadh: Maktaba Dar as-Salaam, 1994), 622.

²² Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University North Carolina, 1975), 4.

²³ Abu Naim al-Asfahani, *Hilyat ul Awliya wa Tabaqat al-Asifiya*, trans. by M. Al-Akili (Philadelphia: Pearl House, 1995), 24-27.

ontic capacity. Good Company is *suhbah*. Joining a brotherhood is essential for mutual encouragement and for inculcation of virtues such as humility, generosity and equanimity; the way of 'poverty' (*fuqarah*). The 'way' that traverses the infinite distance separating man from God is called the *tariqah* which means either the mystical journey - the sum of teachings and practical rules that arise from the Qur'an, the *Sunnah* and the experience of the spiritual masters', of which Muhammad is the ideal. Trimingham attests that 'wherever *Sufism* is strong, some form of *mawlid* is practised, manifesting reverence to Muhammad'.²⁴

The spiritual meetings are termed *rawatib* which are weekly congregational gatherings held either in a mosque, a conventicle, a *zawiya*, or *khanqah*, or at the homes of the shaikh or at one of the *muridin* disciples'. The cardinal liturgical component of the *Sufi* Orders is the *Dhikr*. Michael Gilsenan is not entirely correct when he states that the 'central ritual' is the *Dhikr*. The term applies to the verbal 'remembrance of Allah' and thus all the rituals such as *Salat* are also technically a *dhikr*. The *ratibs* are rather the central rituals, which refer to a *composition* or collection of 'ayat or phrases of the Qur'an for recital'.²⁵ Amongst these *dhikr* are the *so-called* ninety-Names of Allah, (*'asma ul-Husna*) which are strung together to construct a *wird*. It is this 'composition' (*ratib*) which is repeated, either softly *khafi*, or loudly, *jahri* as in the public *rawatib*. The household *ratib* are either silent or loud, congregational or individual, whilst the public ones are loud as they constitute a performance. These could be congregational in a mosque or dramatic *Ratib* presented on a stage as theatre. Gilsenan correctly accords prominence to the *niyyah*, the 'intention which is of salience when the psycho-physiological effects are considered. *Dhikr* also has both somatic and physical effects, as seen amongst the adepts of the *Ratib*, on the home, or on the event of the *Ka'bah* being lit up for the arrival of a saint.²⁶

²⁴Trimingham, *Sufi Orders*, 200.

²⁵Michael Gilsenan, *Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 156.

²⁶At a *milad* held at our home last year, visitors commented that the house looked very bright, although my wife had done no spring cleaning in anticipation of the congregation. I had noticed
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The *wird* access, refers to the 'sections' of the compositions which are repeated according to a set number of iterations, determined by the shaikh. The *wird*, *hizb* or *wazifah* is the litany proper of the brotherhood, which are eponymous of 'compositional sections'. The Ratib has in addition *Anashid* which are hymns or poems of divine love and *Qasida*.²⁷ The *Ratib al-Rifa'iyyah* has a special panegyric to the founder of the Order, composed in 'mystic' verse, which required the assistance of an initiate from Medina, who provided a translation. This constitutes the textual aspects which appear in the Appendix, together with other liturgical texts.

The *Rifa'iyyah* Order

According to Trimingham, although most of the Orders pledge allegiance to the *Qadiriyya*, the *Rifa'iyya* had no genealogical link with them. The *Qadiriyya* were a later development. The *Rifa'iyya* 'were a group of rural bandits originating in the area of present day Kirkuk in Iraq'.²⁸ Contrasted to the other mystical orders which were urban, this classification is unsatisfactory, because it creates a dichotomy between urban and rural Islam and *Sufism*, whereas Islam and *Sufism* are but the different sides of a coin and cannot be simplistically attributed to geographical area or of social strata, such as folk or elite. They were also called the *Bata'ih* as their *ribat* (fortress) was a focus of attraction for the aspirants, just as Bagdad was for the *Qadiriyya*.²⁹ Ahmad ibn Ali ar-Rifa'i (CE 1106-82) was born into an Arab family at Bata'ih, the marshlands of Southern Iraq, between Basra and Wasit. He left the area of his birth only once when he went for pilgrimage which changed his whole life after a religious experience at the Prophet's tomb at Medina. He had two sons who died in infancy, but according

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the difference but thought it was due to the preparations for the rite.

²⁷ Osman Bin Bakar, 'Sufism in the Malay-Indonesian World' in *Islamic Spirituality* 2 S.H. Nasr, ed. (London: SCM Press, 1991), 259-273.

²⁸ Trimingham, *Sufi Orders*, 32-3.

²⁹ There are various eponymous terms for the conventicles, such as *tekkiya* in Turkey, *khanqah* in Persia and in the Indo-Pakistan it is termed a *dargah* in India. In Syria, Levant, North Africa, and the Mediterranean countries, Egypt *zawiya* is quite common. With royal patronage, some of these centres were enormous, and suitably endowed for supporting thousands of disciples and 'travellers' with free board and lodging.

to an Arabic biographer, Yunus as-shaikh 'ibrahim al-Samra'iy he had two daughters, Zainub and Fatima. Trimingham states that he left no offspring.³⁰ Unlike dynastic succession, introduced when the Islamic empire changed from the religious to the political, hereditary succession does not occur in the spiritual arena. It is not passed on to the biological descendants, which is what Trimingham is probably conflating. The spiritual authority is invested to one of the disciples who is most capable and worthy of bearing the arduous spiritual exercises.

Because the genealogy commences with Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet (S.A.W.) and proceeds through to the Imams, an affiliation with the *Shi'i* rituals can be discerned. The Spiritual genealogy reveals its *Shi'i* roots and is detailed in Trimingham's *Sufi Orders*.³¹

The origin of the ritual of the *Rifa'iyya*

The entire rituals of the *Rifa'iyya* owes its origins from an experience at Medina of its founder. Just as historical narrative is the central paradigm of the *Ta'ziah* ritual, the central focus of the *Ratib* is the legend of Ahmed al-Rifa'i's encounter and experience at the Tomb of the Prophet (S.A.W.) in Medina. The following appears in the only Arabic source on the life of Ahmad al-Kabir in an undated work entitled *As-Sayid Ahmed ar-Rifa'i hiyatahu wa 'atharahu*, a hundred page softcover biographical manual by Yunus al-Shayk Ibrahim al-Samra'i, which was printed in Bagdad by the New East Press in Bagdad: 'Amongst his miracle is when he made *haj* during the years 1160 (555 AH) when he stood facing the Noble Messenger (S.A.W.) and said with utmost veneration: 'Greetings (*salam*) to you, O! my grandfather' and a voice replied from the tomb, 'and to you *salam*, O my son'. At this Ahmed went into a trance (*fatawajid*), his colour changed and he sat down on his haunches, cried for a long time and then recited a *shath* (ecstatic verse): Stretch out your hand that I can kiss it with my lips. Whereupon the Prophet (S.A.W.) stretched out his hand from the sacred (*mutahhir*) grave, which was

³⁰ Trimingham, *Sufi Orders*, 112.

³¹ Trimingham, *Sufi Orders*, 46.

witnessed by ninety thousand pilgrims.³²

The incident was witnessed by the various Shaikhs who were present, amongst them Shaikh Abdal Qadir al-Kailani, and Shaikh Hayyat bin Qays al-Harani and Shaikh Khamis, and Shaikh 'Adi bin Musafir al-Shami. Legend states that after this experience he fainted away and when he awoke from his trance, he exhorted his disciples to kill him as he did not wish to live any longer, having achieved the pinnacle of his spiritual journey. His disciples reluctantly tried to stab him, but their daggers had no effect. It is this root paradigm of *Rifa'iyya* piety which his disciples re-enact at every occasion. The core of the Ratib is not the stabbing action, but rather the vocal element which aligns the individual to a vast spiritual network, called the *silsila*, which results in the visual phenomenon - the drama.³³

The term *Ratib* is derived from r-t-b meaning 'fixed' or an arrangement, a composition of certain recitals, verses of the Qur'an or invocations. A.J. Wensinck observed that the word *Ratib* does not occur in any of the technical manuals of Islam, neither in the Qur'an, nor in the *Hadith*, researchers as a result overlooked the *Ratib* as a ritual of Islam. An Imam at the Roubaix Commission was also quite adamant that the Ratib was not part of Islam, because he disregarded its mystical derivation. The word does however occur in its plural form *Rawatib* associated with *Nawafil*, 'certain non-obligatory *salats* or certain litanies', *dhikr*.³⁴ The word therefore does not refer to the performance, as generally misconceived but more to a fixed verbal recitation, composed by the founder of a religious school or mystical order. There are as many *rawatib* therefore, as there are mystical orders. These compositions are then named after the specific sodality. They differ at every performance, even if the same imam is leading the ritual, as observed by Desai.

Varieties of *Rawatib*

³²Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger* (Chappel Hill: University North Carolina, 1985), 304.

³³Yunus al-Shayk Ibrahim al-Samra'i, *as-Sayid Ahmad al-Rifa'i: Hiyatuhu wa Atharahu* (Bagdad: New East Press, nd), 56- 57.

³⁴A.J. Wensinck. 'Ratib' in *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*. H.A.R. Gibbs & J.H. Kramer, eds. (Leiden: Brill. 1961), 470.

There are numerous *ratib* such as the *Ratib al-Haddad*, the *Barzangi*, the '*Alawiyyah*', bearing the names of their founders who were based in Medina and later migrated, and which are prevalent in South Africa. Of these the first and last are performed as household rituals contrasted to the *Ratib of al-Rifa'iyya* which is presented in a dramatic form. Annemarie Schimmel remarks that the *Rifa'iyya* were 'a lower order of *Sufism*' and 'pretenders to *Sufism*' because of their weird behaviour.³⁵ The fact that they achieve an altered state of consciousness, reveals quite the contrary. Bizarre and weird as their expression is, walking naked and dirty, eating live snakes, playing with fire, eating glass, holding live mains cables, reveals that they certainly achieved what to them was a 'spiritual state', *hal*.³⁶ However, whilst mysticism is regarded as world negating in other traditions by withdrawal and asceticism, in Islam the *hijrah* initiated a transformation of religion to a political dimension of world domination.³⁷ The *khalifa* status should be the aspiration of all *mu'mins*.

Sufism certainly has many expressions, such as the *Naqshbandi* (calligraphers) who devoted themselves to writing the Qur'an and other manuals as a devotional practice, to the dramatic whirling dervishes, or the *Chistiyya* with musical performances, to the most bizarre *al-Rifa'iyya* who pierced their bodies with skewers or performed ludic demonstrations with fire and live coal. Excessive asceticism is frowned upon in Islam, according to the *Hadith*³⁸ In the arts, it was *Sufism* which

³⁵ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 209.

³⁶ Michael W. Dols, *Majnun: The Madman in Medieval Muslim Society*. (Oxford: O.U.P., 1992), 179. He cites the case of the Prophets of the Old Testament: 'Isaiah walked naked and barefoot for a period of three years... Prophets usually went about unshorn, clothed in a hairy mantle of sackcloth held together by a leather girdle. ...these acts were often symbolic, and together with their messages, Prophets helped to create the world that they foretold...his words were God's and the words had a special potency and power'.

³⁷ Zakaria Bashier, *Hijra: Story and Significance*. (London: Islamic Foundation, 1983), 103. 'Islam is not like any other religion because it lays clear and unambiguous claim to government.'

³⁸ Abu Darda, one of the Companions, was an ascetic, and underwent long periods of privation, fasting and prayer in Medina. On one of his visits to him, the Prophet Muhammad was shocked to see his wife suffering from poverty and malnutrition. Upon enquiry, he was informed that her husband was always in prayer, and in continual fasting. Whereupon, the Prophet went in search
(continued...)

generated a refined literary genre. Most of the outstanding poetry such as that of Jallaluddin Rumi's, *al-Mathnawi* which refers to the rhyming couplets, were composed by the mystics. The creativity extended to the adaptation of language to local contexts, such as the origin of Afrikaans in South Africa.³⁹ Similarly Urdu in the Indian subcontinent and Persian were offshoots of Arabic, were also established by Muslims. Most of the poetry consisting of eulogies to the Prophet, were penned by the mystics of Islam.

The dramatic *rawatib*

Chelkowski states there is only one dramatic ritual in Islam, the *Ta'ziyyah* performed by the *Shi'a*.⁴⁰ Gustave Grunebaum called it 'dramatised dogma' in his *Muhamaddan Festivals*.⁴¹ We find that there are four dramatic expressions of Islamic ritual deriving from a mystical basis and one historical, i.e. having an emotional link for inculcating an experience: the *Ta'ziyya*, The Whirling Dervishes of Konya, the *Zurkhaneh* ritual in Iran, and the *Ratib al-rifa'iyah* whilst the *Zar* is a communal exorcism ritual in Morocco. By shocking the audience, theatre achieves far more cognitive 'penetration' than dogma or discourse. This is achieved in the *Ratib*. The audience is left in bewilderment and shock, but for the devotees, it is a spiritual concert of physical triumph. Schimmel declares that 'plays were invented to make a sacred event visible, and that divine transcendence is a central theme in Islam.' which ideally apply to the *Ta'ziyyah*.⁴² Schubel concurs that theatre was employed as a most

(...continued)

of Abu Darda, and forced him to eat, thus negating his optional fast, and admonished that his duty to his wife and children was a greater obligation than the asceticism displayed to Allah. Schimmel affirms that 'Asceticism is basically un-Islamic'. Annemarie Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God: A phenomenological approach to Islam* (New York: SUNY, 1994), 98.

* ³⁹ Achmat Davids, 'The Afrikaans of the Cape Muslims from 1815 to 1915: *A sociolinguistic Study*.' M.A. Thesis. Natal University, Durban. (1991). Yasien Mohamed suggests however, that it was more a Javanese-Afrikaans nexus, rather than a pure Arabic. Yasien Mohamed, *The Teaching of Arabic in South Africa* (Cape Town: UWC Formset Press, 1997), 4.

⁴⁰ Peter Chelkowski, *Ta'zieh: Ritual and Drama in Iran* (New York: NYUP, 1979), 1.

⁴¹ Gustave von Grunebaum, *Muhammedan Festivals* (Leiden: Brill. [1958] 1992), 90.

⁴² Schimmel, *Phenomenology*, 102.

effective medium to bring religion to the poor and illiterate.⁴³

The disciple has to submit to a guide, his shaikh. After an initiation into the mystic order, he will be led further along the spiritual path for the realisation of the Divinity, the *vacare Deo* of Christian mystics, the *fana fi Allah* in *Tasawwuf*. Like all mystical orders, initiation is a prerequisite. al-Hujwiri (5th/11th Century) expounded the necessary requisites for possessing a true mystical disposition as consisting of three things: to serve people, to consider oneself a servant or slave; to serve God so completely as to sever all worldly and family ties; to guard his own heart, to remain in communication with his Lord.' In certain *turuq* the disciple is invested with a *khirkah*, a gown as a sign of his admission to the fraternity.⁴⁴ Initiation methods vary from the simple ones to very severe austerities requiring a thousand day fast, or a forty day seclusion *Khahwah*, and other preparatory rituals to enable the Master to evaluate and assess the capability of the novice. Various types of initiation are performed in the different orders.⁴⁵

The Initiation ceremony of the *Rifa'iyya*

At a ceremony held on the night of the 25th November 1996 at the *Astana* of Sheikh Ali Akbar Shah, situated at 13 Cissy Gool Avenue, Rylands, five youth were initiated into the *Rifa'iyya* order. A group of disciples were seated cross legged on the floor of the *astana*, with the Shaikh seated on a raised platform of foam. I was invited to sit with him on the platform. The five novices were seated before him. Some twelve older members of the fraternity sat in the background. Some parents were also present.

⁴³Vernon James Schubel, *Religious Performance in Contemporary Islam*. (Columbia: University South Carolina, 1993).

⁴⁴The origins of the contemporary academic gown are from Islam, with sartorial development initiating from the University of Paris which had the first Department of Arabic in Europe. The gown signified qualification of enlightenment, whilst the turban was replaced by the 'hood'. G. Karim, 'Origins of the Academic Gown and Hood' in *The Column*-UDW Newsletter. University Durban-Westville. (July 1979).

⁴⁵Desai quotes an Initiation on the Grave called 'Riding the Grave' which is spurious, derived from Malay Magic and certainly not mentioned in any Manual on *Tasawwuf*. The only reference to a Grave Exercise is during the ceremony of *Dhikr Qalbi*, where the disciple has to 'imagine that you are dead, that you have been washed, wrapped in your winding-sheet and laid in your tomb, and that all the mourners have departed, leaving you alone to face the Judgement' Cited in A.J. Arberry, *Sufism* (London:Allen & Unwin, [1950]1968), 131.

The Shaikh wore the yellow cap fringed with green braid and was dressed in a yellow tunic bordered by an embroidered design in green which are the colours of the *Chistiyya* and *Qadiri* Orders. Scarves strung around his neck in red and green signified his authority in the *Rifa'iyya* and *Qadiri* orders as well.

After igniting incense, he commenced the service by a *Fatihah*, the encomium, followed by the short *surahs* of the Qur'an, the salutations to the Prophet, and to the founders of the mystical order. He welcomed the initiates, their families and those present and proceeded with the *khutbah*, (a sermon) outlining the procedure, aims and requirements of the ceremony (verbatim): "When one decides to become a *murid* (a disciple) he has to search for a Spiritual Guide (*Murshid*). The search for a true *ustadh*, Master may extend from one to even a different country. There is a *hadith*: 'Guard yourself from whom you take your religion', and attach yourself to a genuine guide (shaikh).

After the *bay'at*, the novice has to watch the performance of the *Ratib* either three or five times under guidance, in the presence of the teacher. 'The teacher will grant the *ijaza* (authorisation) to perform the ritual. The *Rifa'iyyah* has to be with *dhikr* at all times, whether this be in Urdu, you say the word but you do not understand or in Pushtu, Iranian, Arabic, or whatever, it still works. We use the tambourines *tanbur* at times, the drums *nagara* at times.'

Addressing one of his elderly disciples: 'Essopbhai, remember the last occasion we did *dhikr* they floated like fish, doctorsaheb, (turning to me) they floated like fish in the sea. They should see what *dhikr* can do. *Subhanallah*, some of the power given to Rasoolallah is also available to Sultan Ahmed Kabir Rifa'iy. Can other people like Hindu do the same? Yes, they can do the same, but there is a qualitative difference...

We (the mystics) following the Prophet (S) who is *ashraful makhluqat* the best of creation, have been given certain secrets. The West often invents and points out the faults of the Muslims. They fear Islam because we can draw upon power more than any other religion. A schoolgirl puts on the *hijab* (a veil) and the mighty French government armed with nuclear bombs has to legislate against her rights! Their revolutionary slogan of freedom, equality and brotherhood remains an elusive slogan. Unfortunately while the west is aware of the power of Islam, many of us are ignorant

of its power. If we do know that it is a power, we do not know how to tap into it. The Shaikhs are the doors to obtaining power.⁴⁶ We can cut a body in four pieces, don't worry, no blood no mess. They recite a few *ayat* of the holy Qur'an, and they put the pieces together and no joins will be visible. Abdul Quddus, (an adept) he did not know anything, (just like the action of) chloroform, when slicing his neck. They gave him some slaps and he woke up. *Subhanallah* there is no better religion than Islam.

There are code words in Islam. These are not meant for the open bazaar. *Antal Hadi, antal Haq, laysal Hadi, illa hu*⁴⁷ is one of our *dhikr*. We hear 'he ha hu'. We have that *dhikr*. What does it mean, is it for the tune? No it is a code.⁴⁸ In *jazbah* (trance) we can understand what is said. It is actually the *kalima*: *La ila ha illallah*, in code, or as the Christians say Hallelu ya. This knowledge is not to be found in books or schools, *madressas* today. Since you are *murids* (novices), the *Ustadh* (the Master) will teach you. You need a spiritual attachment for the *Dhikr* to work. It is not the music, nor song, but piety achieved through *'ibadat* (worship), and power from the shaikh. Doctor does research, so I want him to know what 'ha he hu' is. A child can only get milk, not solids. (Laughter from the disciples - implying that not being an initiate, I would be unable to understand the secrets inherent in their methods). We will have the *bay'at* followed by a short recital of the *Khatam-e-Khwajgan*.⁴⁹

The shaikh got up from the platform and painstakingly wound a black turban

⁴⁶Constance Padwick, *Muslim Devotions* (London: S.P.C.K. 1961), 214. She remarks that this may not be true of mainstream Islamic thought, although she found a parallel in John 10.9: 'I am the door.'

⁴⁷ You are the Guide; You are the Truth; no Guide is there; excepting You.

⁴⁸This refers to the repetition of the word *Allah*, or the *tahlil*, *La Ilaha illa Allah*, accompanied by certain movements, which easily induce a trance. Gaining momentum during the recitation, this 'formula' is shortened to its last letter *h*, or *ha*, addressed to the left shoulder, then *hu* was spoken to the right shoulder, and *hi* was pronounced with a lowering of the head. Schimmel remarks that anyone attending this *Dhikr* ritual, called a *Hadhra* usually performed under a *Qutb* or guide, is easily carried away by the experience. Schimmel, *Phenomenology*, 176. The word *hadhra* is derived from *h-dh-r* (to be present). Such a person who has an 'experience' is honoured with the title *Hadhrat*, an eponym for the Prophet, as well as other religious divines.

(3-4-1)

⁴⁹This is a *ratib* (composition of recitals) which is widely distributed amongst the Indo-Pakistan Muslims, and also in the Far East. It is recited on Thursdays, special festive occasions and on the death anniversaries of the saints.

round his head, the five initiates were asked to sit round a green rectangular sheet, about 2 meters by 1 metre wide, and requested all those present to be in ritual purity. (*wudu*) He then called for a tray to be brought with a jug, half filled with milk, with five empty goblets, a bowl of sugar and a teaspoon. Sitting before the novices, he instructed that they place their gaze on his forehead.⁵⁰ They should not waver, even whilst drinking the milk that would be offered to them after sacralisation. As he read silently from a prayer manual, and whilst reading he kept putting a teaspoon of sugar into the milk, stirring vigorously, until the sugar bowl was emptied. Then he read the *Fatihah*, followed by some invocations from a small handwritten prayer manual. He asked the first disciple Mohamed to face him, look at his forehead, and was offered the first goblet of milk to be imbibed in three sips, each time uttering the *tasmiyah*. They had to drink it to the last drop. To each he addressed by stating that they were joining the group without any coercion, of their own free-will. Those who were young (below 15 years) had to receive the permission of their parents. One parent was present and assented readily.

After all had drunk the milk, they were asked to hold on to a rolled cloth, analogous of a rope (*habl*) with the right palm facing upwards and the left downwards, and the whole group then read further invocations. The allusion of a rope refers to the Qur'anic verse: Hold fast to rope of Allah, and be not divided.

The whole group then read a *ratib* composed of the following items. (Iterations in parenthesis) : *salawat* (5), *istighfar* (1000), the four short *surahs* commonly known as *Quls* (once each) with the *surah* of Unity, (1000) followed by the *tahlil* (1000). When questioned about the method of counting the iterations required for the recitals, the reply was that the seeds were spread out in the centre of a sheet heaped between the space before the shahsaheb, with little mounds of seeds before every disciple. Each held a few in his hands, and as the individual recited once, he transferred one seed to a

⁵⁰This is one of the techniques of Hypnosis. James Braid, a British physician, rejected the mystical orientation of Mesmer (ancient term mesmerism) and found a certain technique to induce a trance. He made people stare at a bright object located somewhat above the line of vision. He postulated that the *levator* muscles of the eye had to be fatigued by having them fixed in this raised position and that 'somehow this led to nervous sleep or hypnosis'. Gerald C Davison & John M. Neale, *Abnormal Psychology* (London: John Wiley, 1974), 20.

pile nearer to the edge.⁵¹ The prayers terminated with the recital of the *Rifa' iyyah* eulogy as well as invocations to Abdul Qadir Jilani, and a concluding admonition in Urdu: *Jan pechchan ke Ustaz qabul karo* (Acquaint yourself well of the teacher before you accept him as your guide). 'Serving Allah is a priceless gift- and religion (the way) is a serious matter which requires an equally serious commitment. Walking in the garb of the mystical school is not enough. If there is one *wali* (saint) left (who will engage people in *Dhikr* and prayer) *qiyamat* (the day of Reckoning) will not befall, but if corruption overtakes the world, and neglect of prayer occurs, then certainly it will...'⁵² So realise the responsibility placed upon you tonight.

Refreshments (*Niyyaz*) were then brought in on platters, dates and a soft Indian *sojee* (vermicilli with raisons) served to all, followed by tea. The Shaikh drank half of his cup and passed on the cup to me to finish.

It is regarded as being blessed and meritorious to do so, as it transfers spiritual knowledge. This is in accordance with the Prophet placing a chewed date into the mouths of his grandchildren, the twins, Hasan and Husain.⁵³ When Ali was born the Prophet placed his tongue in his mouth.⁵⁴ The entire ceremony has Qur'anic precedents as was explained to me in numerous conversations with Shahaheb.

⁵¹ These oleaceous seeds used for counting are the seeds from a fruit tree in India. When the fruit, which is shaped like a rugby ball, ripens, it becomes the colour of the *Chistiyya*- a yellow gold colour. It is the *baqqoli* tree (may be a specie of *papaya*). However it differs in its seeds, which are as large as a date stone, and shiny due to an oily sheen, which facilitates counting as it slips through the fingers, and remains forever in this condition.

⁵² This is in reference to the *Lutf*, or Grace by which the material world is kept in existence. Muslims believe that each act of prayer is a creative force, which generates an angel and that the day the *Salat* ceases to be performed, Grace would be withheld, resulting in the Apocalypse. Maulana Abed Mia Usmani, *Me'raj al-Mu'minin* (Cape Town: Islamic Publications Bureau, 1944), 62. We are engaged in a translation of this inspired local text on the *Salat*.

⁵³ *Tahnik* is mentioned in the *Hadith*. Bukhari Book of '*al-'aqiqa*, chewing a piece of date and placing in the baby's mouth whilst reciting the *adhan* in one ear with the '*Iqama* in the other. al-Hillali, *Translation of the Qur'an* (Riyadh: Dar as-Salaam, 1993), 1164.

⁵⁴ Schubel, *Religious Performance*, 28.

Qur'anic precedents for the initiation

The term for initiation is termed *al-ba'yah*, and follows the *Sunnah*, in allusion to the Oath of Allegiance taken by the early band of Muslims at Hudaibiya, and which is referred to in the Qur'an in *Surah Fath*, The Victory.⁵⁵ The reason (*'asbab un-Nuzul*) for its revelation was that after the Prophet's migration to Medina, he yearned to return to the Mother City (Makkah). He had a dream in which he saw himself in Makkah and was later assured that it was indeed true, that he would certainly enter the Sacred Mosque at Makkah as revealed in *Surah al-Fath*:

'Truly did God fulfill the vision of his Apostle;
Ye shall enter the Sacred Mosque, if God wills,
With minds secure, heads shaved, Hair cut short,
and without fear. For He knew what ye knew not, and He granted,
Besides this, a speedy victory.'⁵⁶

The term used in the Qur'an is the *Bay'at al-Ridwan* which Yusuf Ali terms, 'the Fealty of Good Pleasure' performed under a tree at Hudaibiya, where the Muslims swore allegiance to the Prophet, in the usual Arab custom, of placing one hand on top of the other, 'but the Hand of God was above them, and he accepted their fealty, by sending down tranquillity *sakinah*⁵⁷ into their hearts', so that they may increase their faith.⁵⁸

Concerning the meanings of *sakinah*, Hughes errs when he decries the fact that Muslim commentators have not appreciated the Hebrew parallels of the word to mean 'sacred presence'. Translators of the Qur'an render the word as 'tranquillity' derived from *sukun*. However, in the *Hadith* literature it is rendered as 'sacred presence'. *Sahih Bukhari*: 'When the Qur'an is recited there descends *sakinah* - the benevolent

⁵⁵ 48:1-26

⁵⁶ Yusuf Ali, *al-Qur'an* (Durban: IPC, 1951), 1399 Fn. 4910.

⁵⁷ The word *Sakinah* occurs thrice in the Surah, and according to Karen Armstrong, who derives it from the Pentateuch, it means the 'presence of God'. Because the pronominal suffix of 'his' is attached, it could mean a sacred presence, which approximates more to our perspective as an 'experience'.

⁵⁸ Yusuf Ali translates the word as 'tranquillity' which is weighted along literal rather than experiential perspective. Yusuf Ali, *Qur'an*, 1393. Fn. 4877. This is clearly incorrect since the pronominal suffix, 'his' as occurring in 48:4, and 9:26 mean a heirophany.

presence.⁵⁹ However Baidhawi, does indeed relate the Jewish nexus, where it signifies the presence of God in a spiritual sense, as light, cloud, or fire, or as in the incident of the Burning Bush.⁶⁰ Margaret Armstrong is amongst the few contemporary authors who correctly renders the word as 'a heirophany- a 'sacred presence'.⁶¹ Desmond Desai also reports that he was informed that the *olea* (sic), the 'deceased saints' arrive during the *Ratib* after they are invoked.⁶² Tabari compares the sacred presence to 'a *jinn* like' being, probably borrowed from pagan conceptions.

Another *Surah* speaks of having a link with a spiritual person in *Surah al -Maidah*: (5:38) *al-Wasila*: O You who believe, Do your duty (fear: 'ittaql allah) Seek the means of approach to him (*wasila*). And strive in his path (*sabilihi*) so that you can prosper; *tuflihun*.

The approach can only be realised through a sacred person, and the *sabil* actually is not the theological definition of it as a way - an act of charity but Allah himself. The Shaikh said that the aspirants had concluded a bargain with Allah and recited from *Surah Taubah*: 9:111, 'God has purchased of the believers, their persons

⁵⁹Bukhari, *Faza'il Qur'an* Bab 11 and 15. Goldziher states that the word is analogous to the Hebrew *ruah hakkodesh* which rests on the prophets, and remarks that the word is sometimes used by Islamic writers to mean 'Holy Ghost'. *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*. Gibbs and Kramers (eds), 489.

⁶⁰ The Ark (*Tabut*) mentioned in *Surah Baqarah* 2:240, is the box containing the Books of Moses (*Taurat*) which was made of boxwood and gilded over with gold, and was three cubits long, and two wide, and in it was the *sakinah* from your Lord (meaning power). Moses used to carry it when he went forth for war. It was said that it also contained the staff of Moses and the turban of Aaron'. T. P. Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam* (Karachi: Book House, [1983] (1885), 560. When 'Sacred Presence' is implied, there are three references to it in the Qur'an: 9:40, 9:80, and 48:2.

⁶¹Margret Armstrong, *Muhammad* (London: Gollanz Paperback, [1991] (1995), 224. She traces the word from the Hebrew *Shekinah*, 'a term for God's presence in the world'. Badr and Hudaybiyah, therefore, were both 'signs' of salvation that revealed that God was mysteriously present in current historical events.' The Prophet said that *Surah Fath* was 'dearer to me than anything under the sun'. (223) This is probably because he had dreams of entering Makkah, for which he had yearned after being compelled by circumstances and commanded by Allah to leave Makkah. The Prophet and his companion Abubakr, whilst fleeing from the pagan Makkans, and sheltering in a cave from them, were also consoled by a revelation, which brought them '*sakinah*'

⁶²Desmond Desai errs in the spelling. 'Olea' refers to Auliya (plural of *wali*), friend of God or a saint. (Qur'an:10:63) It can be the presence of a living saint as well. The Wahabis categorically deny the idea of saints since it infringes the concept of *Tauhid*, the Unity of the Godhead.

and their goods, for theirs (In return) is the gardens of Paradise. They fight in his cause and slay and are slain. A promise binding on him in Truth, through the Law of the Torah the Gospel and the Qur'an. And who is more faithful to his Covenant than God? Then rejoice in the bargain which you have concluded, that, is the achievement supreme.' It was followed by *Surah Mumtahana*: ^{60:12} ~~30:12~~ which details the ascetic requirements from women disciples: 'O! Prophet, When believing women come to thee to take the oath of fealty to thee that they will not associate in worship any other thing whatever with God, that they will not steal, that they will not commit adultery (or fornication), that they will not kill their children, that they will not utter slander, intentionally forging falsehood, and that they will not disobey thee, in any just matter. Then do receive their fealty, and to pray to God for them for forgiveness, for Allah is most Forgiving, Most Merciful'.

Empowerment through the *Ratib*

The novice is assured of victory if he swears allegiance to Muhammad, ^(S.A.W.) the founder of the spiritual journey which is Islam, by following the physical act of placing his hand in the sheikh's hand; to seek a *wasila* (a link) to the source of power. Shahsaheb used the metaphor of 'plugging into a mains circuit', and explained that the disciple had sold himself to Allah in the *Bay'ah* which is described as a bargain in the Qur'an, in which the novice dedicates himself to work for the pleasure of Allah, and receives in turn the promise of the Gardens of Paradise as a reward.

Women can also be admitted to the spiritual order, but are not permitted to participate in the theatrical display.⁶³ Some of the audiences were mixed with the ladies confined either to the back or side lanes. The verse above enjoins chastity and a pattern of conduct which prohibits immorality, promiscuity, backbiting and other evils that were present in female society in pagan times, and which also prevail in modern society. *Hijab* was introduced to protect the females from being molested, as a sign of their commitment, just as the *khirka* (cloak) is enjoined for men. The *Hijab* was meant for the elite of Arabian society, and was intended firstly for the Prophet's wives, 'as a

⁶³Desai, *Thesis*.

symbol of their superior status' which was then adopted by the generality.⁶⁴

The *Ratib al Rifa'iyyah* does not admit any female adepts, but there is no reason for women not to join other quietist spiritual female groups performing devotional ratibs, because the Qur'an is quite just (balanced) in enjoining equality in piety. There is an envious record of pious Muslim women, eg Rabi'a al Adawiyya, rivalling Theresa of Avilla in piety and religious experiences.

Interviews and Conversations

Interviews were conducted with Imam Abdullah Jabbar c/r Atkins and Mertz Close Grassy Park, on Monday 01-07-1996 at his home, accompanied by Mr Reshad Jedaar, of the Islamic College, Gatesville. His wife confirmed that he possessed spiritual powers, and one example she gave was that when they were 'relocated' due to the Group Areas Act, they were plagued by an invasion of mice, who were everywhere, in the house, the kitchen, the yard and ran freely across the front garden. She had tried all the popular remedies without any success. One day when she returned home in the evening, her husband asked her if she had observed any change, and she noticed that the mice had suddenly disappeared. The Shaikh told us that he had buried *raqam* (amulets) at various spots of the house. He does spiritual healing if the case is special.

Shahsaheb's miracles were more astounding. When questioned about these, Shahsaheb pointed to a photograph pinned to a frame in his dining room, of an incident which took place on the 24th March 1991 at Nizampur Taluka Mangoan in the District of Raigad Maharastra in India, (165 Km south of Bombay) when a *Zinda Karamat* was performed by Hazrat Ahmed Shah Warisi (RA) father of Peer Sayed Sultan Akbarali Chisti, Nizami, Sabri, Warisi Rifa'iy, Qadiri, Naqshbandi, Suhrawardi, Uwaisi. Eight disciples had lifted a fifty kilogram rock by pointing their fingers at it, and touching it as it rose in the air. It was held aloft until the *murids* exhaled. The second miracle occurred on the 28th July 1991 when a much heavier rock of 72 Kg started to rise by the loud invocation of 'Ya Sultan Akbar Ali Shah Baba'. (referring to Shahsaheb). The original photographs in colour, with the invocations recited alongside list the following *Adhkar*: The *tasmiya*, 'there is no presence other than Allah', the *Tahlil*, 'Remember Me and I will remember you', 'we regard Allah as the best of Protectors, The best of

⁶⁴Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 198.

was revealing. He said that the disciple enjoys a special spiritual link with his guide, and that it requires that the disciple be 'tuned in' to his sheik at all times, one of the reasons for being in a constant state of ritual purity *taharah*.

He explicated the fact that the guide can be present at different and scattered places, even in different continents as analogous to a television signal which can only be received if correctly 'tuned in', no matter where the disciples were. 'When Mandela speaks in London how is he present in every home in the world?' If science and technology could do it, most certainly Islam would also do it even better! One example of a mystic conversation occurs in 19:51 Moses called on Mt Sinai for assistance: '*wa qaranahu naji'an*', and Allah assisted him. Dawood was also laid on the ground, when Abdul Majid tried his utmost to slice his abdomen, but the knife only chaffed the skin. A white powder was applied when slight bleeding did occur.

Shahsaheb explained that the white powder was gathered from the *agarbatti* (incense) which is burned at every function. It is well known that ash functions as a styptic, and that the incense enables one to enter a spiritual dimension, as Eliade has observed. Saliva is often used to control bleeding, based on the sunnah of the prophet who is purported to have used saliva to cure Ali, who was blinded by ophthalmia and whose attack on the Fort of Khaybar was a major victory for the Muslims. He was chosen to bear the black flag made from the robe of Ayesha, over which the Prophet had prayed during the night. Previous to the victory, the attacks led by Abubakr and Umar had both been repulsed. The plea '*Ya 'Ali, Ya mushkil kusha, Ya madad*'. (O Ali relieve our difficulty, O Helper (Allah) is a frequent cry of the distressed.⁶⁶ It is claimed that the saliva is efficacious because it is blessed.

Chains are also used by Imam Gafiieldien of Bosmont in Johannesburg. In the *Ta'ziyyah* rituals, molten chains are handled without any burning, symbolising the chains in which the Prophet's family were paraded in Damascus, after the tragedy at Kerbala. One of the attendees, at a function organised by Rasools Travel in Rylands, Mr Gool, related that in 1985 at the Gawsia Manzil, a group of *Ratib* performers, dipped their hands in oil, and then slid them along molten chains. The oil burst into flames, and their hands were not singed at all. Fire displays which are actual proofs of

⁶⁶Schubel, *Religious Performance*, 29.

sanctity are not usually performed in South Africa. Imam Gafiieldien of Bosmont in Johannesburg does have a fire display in his rites. Here he sets fire to a scarf which does not burn. There is a possibility that the scarf may have been dipped in alum which is a fire deterrent, but there is no proof of this, since protection from fire is well known amongst the mystics, such as the *munaqara* (challenge) of Shibli who threw one of his disciples in the Tigris, saying: 'If he is sincere he will be saved'. A few days later he was challenged to prove his own *himma* (high spiritual status) by taking out live coals from a glowing fire, which he did.⁶⁷

There are many 'lay' practitioners who are perfect examples of the comments of Lawson and McCauley on language competence; that it was not necessary to understand or have knowledge of a ritual for it to be efficacious. Shahsaheb went further by asserting 'that the novices did not have to have any knowledge of the history of the *Rifa'iyya* to perform the Ratib. Nor did it matter what language was used, Urdu, Arabic, Persian, Gujerati, it was efficacious', and that once the 'presence' of the sacred persons took place, their entrance being through the portal, it did not matter if one was a believer or not, transfer of the *barakah* and protection by the *Awliya* occurred. This was borne out by another novice, who did not know the history of the fraternity, nor understand the recitals was Boeta Abdalla of Site 536 Bontehewel Drive who also performs the Ratib. He said Imam Ahmed was his *Ustadh* and that he could not provide us with any information without the consent of his spiritual master. He said that he did not know how it worked, only that he was empowered by some 'strange power' to do it. He awaits the Shaikh's nod to enter into the 'play with daggers'. He believes anyone can do it if his master grants him permission.

The life of a *khalifah*

An interview with Khalifa Omar Khan, of 38 Second Avenue, Belgravia was most illuminating about the life of a 'holy person'. Khalifa Omar is 60 years old, a *madressah* (Muslim school) teacher for 41 years. He has been teaching *pro Deo* to any student who enrolls, but works as a tailor in the 'stoep' (veranda) of his humble white cottage in Belgravia. This displays an important dimension of the *Ratib* performances.

⁶⁷Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 179.

The *Ratib* is used to inculcate proper Islamic values for controlling moral behaviour and for teaching Islam as a value system. Because it has a personal link with the teacher, which extends to the saints, to the Prophet's family and indeed the Prophet himself, it has an emotional facet, which is absent in formal Islamic education as practised in *Sunni* schools.⁶⁸ This is also the position with the *Ta'ziyyah* rituals as observed by Schubel. He was taught the craft of tailoring by the father of Imam Mo'tin Saban, the present head of the Muslim Judicial Council. He was also a boxer but because of arthritis in his left shoulder had to abandon the sport. He was introduced to *tasawwuf* by his mother who was a *khalifa*, as she was very pious from the age of seven. She used to be in meditation all the time, even late at night. His father was a '*bilal*' (*muezzin*) at the Muir Street Mosque in Bo-Kaap under Sheikh Ahmad Taliep. He studied the Qur'an under Shaikh Salie Abadi. He buried his father himself at Cape Town. He then 'inherited' the liturgical duties of his father, and for 17 years was the *muezzin* at the Long Street, where the congregation proposed that he be the Imam. He refused the post as he had no formal training to be an Imam, and does not hold any *sanad* (certificate). He could nevertheless prepare and deliver the *Khutba*, (Friday sermon), conduct marriage, funeral, and birth ceremonies. Actually he prefers to practise as a spiritual healer rather than a formal teacher, finding that formal teaching stultifies the spirit.

He married at 21 years of age, and even whilst married sat with the Books of *Hadith*, such as Bukhari and Muslim till late at night. He studied the Qur'an under the father of the present Sheikh Faik Gamieldin. He had led the *Tarawih* prayers at both Gatesville and Constantia. When he was 18 years old he received permission from * Khalifa Abdalla Petersen, now residing in Lion Street Bo-Kaap, who was very ill, but who is the most 'powerful' *khalifa* in the Cape. This *Khalifa* had made many disciples, probably running into two hundred and had performed many miracles, and was the

⁶⁸ G. M. Karim, 'New Perspectives in Islamic Education' delivered at the First World Conference on Islamic Education, Makkah. 1977, where contemporary defects and deficiencies are due to a legalistic and ritualistic bias with the lack of an emotional response. In South Africa it is compounded by the fact that Muslims do not have a working knowledge of the language of the text, the Qur'an, so the students are deprived of the benefit of the sacred text, whose moral values are completely lost.

most experienced in the *Ratib*. Khalifa Omar is also a spiritual healer, makes *Ta'widh* (amulets) against all afflictions, does exorcisms because he has 'mastered' (empowered with) one of the major *Surahs*, called the 'heart' of the Qur'an, the *Surah Ya Sin*, which he also uses as medicine for any physical illness. He advised that since *Ya Sin* is the heart of the Qur'an, anyone who reads it regularly, will be protected from harm in the grave. Whoever is a friend of *Ya Sin* cannot be questioned in the grave by the angels *Munkir* and *Nakir*, because it intercedes for him. He also visits the *Karamats* regularly with his students, to invoke the souls (*arwah*) of the Prophets, their wives, *azwaj*, the *ahl al bayt*, the Prophet's family, the *sahaba*, companions, the *shuhuda'* martyrs, the *awliya*, the saints, and pious elders who empower him.

He stressed that he possessed no power himself, all the power is from the Prophet Muhammad which is transmitted along a long line (*silsilah*) of saints. He can be said to possess the ability summon these souls by virtue of the fact that he has been initiated into the *silsilah* and has been taught the technique (*tariqah*) of doing so. He belongs to the *Chistiyya* order also. He therefore commences his recital with the *ratib* of this group, then he greets all the Prophets. His group had to perform a two *rakat* prayer *Salat Rifa'iyya* which is the practice of the Order.

He has also treated many cases of *jinn* Possession, something the ordinary school teacher *mu'allim* cannot do. He has never seen any designs or coloured spots (entoptics) during the *Ratib* performance. However, because he suffers from insomnia, he recites one *juz* (a thirtieth part the Qur'an) every night which has become a ritual. He also reads *Surah Ya Sin* in his *Fijr salat* (dawn prayer) completing half for each *rakaat*. This brings luck, *barakah*, success and fulfilment.

When questioned about the prodromata of any sensory and physiological effects when he engages in night vigils, he replied that sometimes when he does the night *dhikr* he feels hot, and perspires. When asked about the presence of unintelligible, mysterious words, probably of Sanskrit or Malay origin in his invocations, which the reciters could not explain, he stated that these were 'magic words' possessing power. The presence of these 'foreign' or 'mysterious' words were also the reason for certain writers having misconceived the *Ratib* to be a 'Hindu custom'. These words denote the influence of Hindu priests who had converted to

Islam, and who introduced their own prayers in the ritual. But these are steadily being removed, as links with the past are decaying, whilst links with Arab mystics are being cultivated. This was borne out by Shahaheb's recitals where Arabic, Urdu and Persian invocations were utilised. On our desire to be informed of the 'mantra' for the treatment of haemorrhage he recited a *ratib* a composition' for stopping bleeding, which in translation is: *Tasmiya and Istighfar*: 'I beg forgiveness from Allah for having erred , (Al sal kas, Lal has, Uskun ayoha Dam.). The Arabic words are *astaghfirullahi, ayuhad dum bi haqqihi bi hadhihi al-huruf* 'By the certainty of these letters, (al sal kas, lal has) stop O blood'. The words in parenthesis are regarded as magical words, possessing power, and invoke the powers of the other world to become active in this world. He then touches the bleeding site with his *tahya* 'witnessing' finger.

He stressed that all the participants had to be strictly observant of all the formal rituals of Islam, and that miracles could not be effected whilst one was tardy in observing obligatory rituals *fara'idh*, or lax in performing *taharah*. Like Imam Martin, another *Ratib* exponent and healer, he also laid emphasis on the *wudu*, supervising it personally so that the performance could be a success. Shahaheb had similar considerations. His lament was that the *Ratib* groups are shrinking because the young people are becoming rebellious and leaving the religious rites of *Tariqah* (the path).⁶⁹

Sheikh Burhanuddin Abbas of the Islamic College in Gatesville arranged an interview with one of the oldest 'Khalifas' in the Bo-Kaap, Khalifa Abdalla Petersen, popularly known as Boeta Broertjie. Residing at 74 Lion Street, in a beautiful semi-detached two storey house, he was critically ill on the afternoon of the 28th November, 1996, but when he heard of our mission, we were permitted to see him for a short while. He is 74 years old, and had a cardiac bypass two years ago. He was suffering from the complications of the operation, and was in cardiac failure, and on an oxygen mask. He spoke slowly and with difficulty, and said that he had performed the *Ratib* for over 50 years. He was born in South Africa, in District Six. When I explained the purpose of my mission, that I was doing a thesis, he remarked that he was well aware

⁶⁹Georgina Buijs observed a similar phenomenon in the rituals of 'village Hinduism which the younger generation had largely rejected'. In contrast the *Ratib* sodalities are increasing. G.Buijs, 'An analysis of Some Factors affecting religious commitment in a South African Indian Community.' *Religion in Southern Africa* 2, no. 2 (1981), 25-35.

of the medical aspects of the *Ratib*, especially when it came to stopping bleeding. A young girl had cut her hand whilst cleaning a glass pane, and nothing would staunch the bleeding. They had tried spiders' webs, ash, and bandages. He was asked for assistance, and he held the bleeding hand in his hands and invoked: 'By the *qudrat* (power) of Allah, I command you, O Blood, to stop.' And with the glory of Allah, the bleeding stopped. His wife testified to this incident, and also prompted him to relate to us his experience whilst on pilgrimage to Makkah. He took up the conversation and narrated that they were passing a lady who was crying from pain in her knees, and his wife pleaded with him to alleviate her suffering. He *mantrad* (prayed) over the affected arthritic joint and in short while she was smiling as the pain had dissipated.

The use of varied terminology, the use of 'mantra' which is specifically used in the Buddhist tradition probably gave rise to the misconception that *Ratib* was of Buddhist origin. He made a derogatory remark about those people who had called the *Ratib* a Hindu ritual. He affirmed that the *Ratib* was a select expression of Islam and only a few could perform it. It was beyond the scope of the '*ulama*. This was *Tasawwuf*, to which the Qur'an refers. Man is only allowed to have a certain kind of knowledge. The other has to be developed, which accounts for the powers bestowed on the adepts of the *Ratib*. The incidents during the encounter of Moses with Khidr in the Qur'an when miraculous events could not be understood by Moses alludes to the existence of a superior or hidden form of knowledge which Moses did not possess as narrated in the Qur'an: A fish prepared for their lunch jumped out of the basket and swam away, and when Khidr performed certain acts which seemed irrational to Moses but which were later clarified by him:

'As for the boat which I damaged, it belonged to poor fisherman, and it was scuttled to prevent a tyrant king from confiscating it, and as for the youth whom I killed, his parents were god fearing people, who would be grieved at his obstinate rebelliousness and ingratitude. As for the wall which we repaired without recompense, there lies buried within it a treasure. It belonged to two orphans in the town, sons of a righteous

man, preserved for them till they reach maturity.' ⁷⁰

Another more direct indication of a 'new knowledge not vouchsafed to previous generations of Prophets occurs in *Surah Baqarah* v. 151:

'A similar (favour have you already received) in that we have sent among you an Apostle of your own, rehearsing to you, of our signs, and sanctifying you, (*yuzakikum*) and instructing you in scripture and wisdom and in new knowledge (*wa 'alamakum ma lam ta 'lamum*) which you did not possess before'.

Traditionally the distinction of Muhammad ^{SAW} compared to the other prophets is that whilst previously Law *shari'ah*, was given, Muhammad was granted ^{SAW} *tariqah* as well, a means of approaching or contacting Allah, according to a *hadith*: *Salat* is the spiritual ascent of the believer.⁷¹ The mystics therefore derive validation of their practices directly from these verses. He became a disciple of the *Saif* (sword) *Jamah*, led by Shaikh Ahmed Baserdien. He was an old man and when he died he made me a shaikh. I have been doing the *Ratib al Rifa'iyah* for fifty years.

We used to do the *Gadat* every Tuesday night, in my house, the *Ratibs* of *Iduroos, al-Haddad*.⁷² Syed Mohamed al-Iduroos was my *murshid* and he was *Chistiyya*, so I was initiated in that *silsila*. I had my own *jamah* too, when we made '*ismul latif, Ratib al-Attas, Ratib al-Qadiri, Barzanji*. He paused to think and I prompted to him about the *Naqshbandi*. We made all the *Ratibs*, but not *Naqshbandi*. We made ten different sorts of *Gadat*, ever week a different one so that the disciples could get used to the various kinds. We still do it, but now that I am sick we do it every two weeks. About forty people attend, including a lot of youngsters. Some of them get married and break away and others join. When questioned about the social

⁷⁰Paraphrase of *Surah al Kahf* verses 79-82. Yusuf Ali's Commentary of the verses suggests that Khidr was Melchidezek and again in Gen. 14:18-20 he appears as King of Salem- a high priest god and that the 'highest spiritual knowledge often seems paradoxical to those who have not the key to it'.

⁷¹The Qur'an proclaims that the 'way' *tariqa*, granted to Muhammad ^(SAW) would prevail over all the other paths revealed to mankind. The verse occurs in *Surah Taubah* 9: 33, *al-Fath* 48:28 and *Surah Saff* 61:9.

⁷²Colloquial for the *ratib al-haddad*

benefits, he replied that it did keep the young people out of unnecessary mischief. And especially, the *Ratib al Rifa'iyya* being the main *gadat* which gave them a sense of achievement. It was great to be able to do these things with a sword, for the youngsters. I was 'playing' (performing) with the dagger when I was seven years of age. My father was the Imam of Cape Town at that time. His name was Muhammad Toyer. He was called Imam Sarang. I do not know why they called him thus. His real name was Muhammad Taher, corrupted to Toyer.

On being asked whether he did spiritual healing he replied in an emphatic affirmative. He narrated an incident when one of the renowned shaikhs, Shaikh Salih Abadi came to him suffering from gout and asked to be cured. He thought that: 'I am a man from the street, and how can I mantra him? It was improper. He should go to his own people'. So I refused. But he pleaded (*kannala*) and kept on phoning me, so I consented. After he left, I soon began to suffer from ^{gout}gout too, and when I met him at the mosque during *Jum'ah* (Friday) Prayers, he told me he was fully cured, so I told him that 'cant he 'soek' (find) for me someone to mantra me?', and he only smiled. I asked him whether he thought that the gout was transferred from the Shaikh Abadi to him, and he retorted that he never had the illness before, but could not make such accusations. He was also a teacher for the neighbourhood children as an act of charity, because it was unlawful to receive fees for teaching God's word.⁷³

Origins of *Sufi* ritual

Almost all the *Sufi* Orders practice *Rawatib* in one form or another. The ritual consists of recitations from the Qur'an, and accompanied by gestures which is interpreted as dances. Jean-Louis Michon cautions in regarding the ecstatic dance of the *Sufis* as being 'entertainment' as in Western society, the Arabic for this latter type of 'dance' being *raqs*.⁷⁴ An English *Sufi* group in Norwich, in the translation of the letters of the Mawlay al-'Arabi ad-Darqawi, states that the Order has two practises, which its adepts perform as part of their discipline. One is the dance, called *hadra* or

⁷³ Fazlur Rahman notes that the 'ulama of India deemed it unlawful to receive fees for teaching the *Qur'an*. Fazlur Rahman, *Health and Medicine in the Islamic Tradition* (Kuala Lumpur: Majeed, 1993), 92

⁷⁴ Jean-Louis Michon, 'Sacred Music and Dance in Islam' in Nasr, *Islamic Spirituality* 2, 487.

raqs (sic), and the other is the *dhikr* or invocation of the Supreme Name.⁷⁵ The author regards any corporeal movement as an expression of worship, which he equates with dance. A ritual termed the *sama* refers to an 'audition' either of the Qur'an, or if of sacred poetry it is called a *musha'ira*. If it is accompanied by music as prevalent amongst the *Chistiyya*, it refers to a *qawwali* (sacred speech) which are recited to the accompaniment of music and drums. 'Dance' would extend from the relatively mild *Hadara*, which is the up-down stooping movement when standing, to the whirling dervishes who execute a fast gyratory movement, to the stylised movements of the *Ratib al-Rifa'iyah* as detailed by Desmond Desai in his thesis.

The words of revelation when recited by The Prophet (SAW) to his Companions (RA) caused such ecstasy amongst them, that they executed physical movements to express their joy. Of these the *hadra* is the simplest, whilst the whirling dance, which became the rite of the *Mawlawiyya*, followers of Jallaludin Rumi in Konya, is attributed to Abu (RA) Bakr. The *Qadiri* and *Shadhili* orders are given to leaping in the air, following the action of Ja'far ibn Ali Talib. Others do the bending at the waist and rising therefrom in rapid order, or turning their head from right to left, whilst most do rapid breathing in and out, crying out '*ha he hu*' or similar sounds. Michon links these movements to punctuations of Semitic speech, and finds a parallel in Judaistic prayer.⁷⁶ It also implies that the sacred word is endowed with power causing a physiological reaction, an ecstasy in these cases according to the challenge in the verse of the Qur'an.⁷⁷ The Caliph (RA) 'Umar was so affected by the auditions that he had to confine himself to bed for a few days till he recovered.⁷⁸

al-Qushayri describes that the Prophet (SAW) had said that the 'audition of *Surah Hud*

⁷⁵Mawlay al-'Arabi as-Darqawi, *The Darqawi Way: Letters from the Shaikh to the fuqara*. (Norwich: Diwan Press, 1979), 4. The Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir as-Sufi of Norwich states that the dance called a *raqs* is described in the Qur'an. This is not so. The difference between the recital (*dhikr*) and the ritual are commonly misconstrued. Whilst the *dhikr* is often mentioned in the Qur'an, the actual ritual is not.

⁷⁶Michon, *Islamic Spirituality* 2, 488-9.

⁷⁷In 13:28 man is 'challenged' by the verse: Does the remembrance *dhikr* of Allah not induce tranquillity in the hearts?

⁷⁸ Abu Naim al-Asfahani, *Hibat al Awliya wa Tabaqat as-Sufiya*. Trans. Al-Akili, 51.

has made my hair turn white'. When one of the companions asked why this so, he saw the Prophet in a dream telling him that it was not the narration about the Prophet Hud, but rather the words.⁷⁹ The incidence attests to the fact that there is a neuro-physiological reaction to the Sacred Word. The *Surah* is one of a constellation of thirty chapters which contain *al Muqatta't* (truncated letters at the opening of the chapter). There were numerous conjectures from the earliest of times about the meaning of these letters, ranging from the initials of the scribes as orientalists favoured, to numerological values based on *gametria*, to the majority of the Muslim savants, amongst them Ibn Hazm, al-Mubarrad, Zamakhshari, Baidhawi, Ibn Kathir and lately Muhammad Asad who consider these letters to reflect the miraculous nature of Revelation. Fazlur Rahman considers these to be a form of affectionate address to the Prophet, since over half of them end in '*mim*' referring to Muhammad, as is the 'heart' of the Qur'an, *Surah Ya-Sin* is regarded as an eponym of Muhammad. *CS-AW*.

We propose an alternate view because of the fact that the words caused a physiological reaction in the recipient as a result of a '*Numinous* experience'. The abbreviated letters either connate a *wahy*, an utterance which is comprehensible only to the recipient, or have an influence on the physiology of the body during 'religious experience'.⁸⁰ The Muslims believe that the sacred word has ontic capability, just as attributed to in Rabbinic texts, and a specific verse of the Qur'anic revelation is used to affirm this: Verily, His command when He intends a thing, is only that He utters to it, '*kun*' Be! and it becomes.' (36:82).⁸¹

Gestures

The devotees of the *Ratib* are fully convinced that theirs is a religious activity and a form of piety with certain arcane objectives. They link it to the formal prayer. The posturing of the first act with *tamboesters* was explained by a student from Madina as mimetic of the bending and rising therefrom of the *ruk'u* posture. They bowed

⁷⁹ al-Qushayri, *Principles of Sufism* trans B.R. von Schlegell. (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1990), 184.

⁸⁰ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an* (London: Brill, 1980), 992.
A. Yusuf Ali. *The Holy Qur'an*. Translated into English. (Karachi: Ashraf. 1975): 118ff

⁸¹ Katz, *Mysticism and Language*, 16.

down and up simulating the prostrations of the formal prayer in total submission. A similar action occurs during the *hadra*. Nicholson relates of a pious elder admonishing a group engaged in a *ratib* during the prayer-call by urging: Prayer! Prayer! They retorted: We are at prayer!

Titus Burkhardt relates that the first *Sufis* founded their dancing *dhikrs* on the dances of the Arab warriors. 'Later *Sufi* orders in the East, such as the *Naqshbandis*, adopted certain techniques of hatha-yoga and so differentiated their form of dance. Jallal ad-din Rumi, drew the inspiration for the collective *dhikr* of his community from the popular dances and music of Asia minor'. Titus Burkhardt opines that when there is perfect harmony between the active intelligence (the reason) and the passive intelligence (feeling or sensibility) it prefigures the spiritual state: the *al-hal*, to explain the involuntary movements.⁸² Gilsenan observes that *dhikr* can be read vertically and horizontally like a musical score. And in inner and outer time.⁸³

All mystical or esoteric practices require a *shaman* or guide. Martin Lings remarks that whilst a Master is necessary, it does not 'exclude the possibility' that a gifted initiate, even without one could reach a high stage of spirituality, 'by virtue of the great weight of spiritual heredity behind him'. In *Sufism* this is a distinct requirement.⁸⁴ 'The presence of a Master means direct contact with the Divine Source itself, the presence transmits 'the full force of spiritual' power directly from the Prophet himself.⁸⁵ All the *Sufi* orders therefore have a diagram of the Spiritual Tree, the *shajarah*. This is usually framed and hung in the home of the disciple, or Master. After the Prophet, the lines diverge to Ali, the son-in-law of Muhammad, or the first Caliph, or successor to Muhammad. Hence the *Ratib* imams are often called *Khalifas*. The *Khalifa* is not the name of the ceremony as has occurred at the Cape, further evidence of a deformation.

Shihabuddin Yahya Suhrawardi, who founded the sodality of the

⁸²Titus Burkhardt, *An Introduction to Sufism* (London: Aquarian Press, 1990), 140.

⁸³M. Gilsenan, *Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 186

⁸⁴Martin Lings, *A Moslem Saint of the Twentieth Century* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1961), 74.

⁸⁵ Lings, *Moslem Saint*, 78.

inspiration, but to be recited as an act of commitment in worship; nor did it become a mere sacred source of authority as the founding of Islam receded into time.'⁹¹ All the mystical schools have selections from the Qur'an termed *wird*, or recitals, which can lead to visions, or altered states of consciousness. Constance Padwick cites the experience of the founder of the *Tijaniyyah* Order, 'who saw a vision of the Prophet in his waking hours in daylight'...and 'sought his Counsel in small things and great'.⁹²

Invocation by the Divine Name

Michon states that the name *Allah* is the 'invocation par excellence'. The unparalleled name of the Divinity is *Allah* which has three aspects, the Supreme Name, *al-'ism al-'azam*, the Unique Name, *al-'ism al-mufrad*, the Name of Majesty *al-'ism al-jalalah*.⁹³ The Qur'an is quite emphatic about its aural significance: 'When the Qur'an is recited, be silent and listen!' and equally insistent with regard to its recitation 'in measure tones'.⁹⁴ McClain observes that 'when the Qur'an is reduced to writing, we diminish our own world and falsify Muhammad's.' Being an ethnomusicologist, he observed that one of the cardinal features of the Qur'an is its aural revelation and oral recitation, 'in measured tones'. McClain has shown that the oral recitation engenders harmonics which cause an altered state of consciousness. Desai stated that the 10 beat musical frequency of the drums produced the trance. However the harmonics produced by a beat frequency has a larger role. Desai, a musicologist, does not mention harmonics, which reveals a lack of access to recent works on the effect of music on physiology. al-Attas confirms the validity of the 'sound' rather than the word, being of salience by asserting that the study of words as words in the Qur'an leads to deviation from the real truth underlying them, just as the preoccupation in philosophy with things

⁹¹Marshall Hodgson, *Ventures*, Vol 1,366.

⁹²Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger* (London: University North Carolina Press, 1985), 226. See also Constance Padwick, *Muslim Devotions*, 21.

⁹³Jean-Louis Michon, in *Islamic Spirituality*, Vol. 2, 277.

⁹⁴ *Surah al-Muzzamil*. 73:4: 'And recite the Qur'an in a loud but melodious voice'.

as things leads to erroneous, ordinary level of experience belief'.⁹⁵ It is a well known phenomenon that people have collapsed and died upon hearing the Qur'an, and for others to go into ecstasy as reported by both Titus Burckhart and more intensively by Gilbert Roguet.

The ear is a superior organ of perception than the eye

A significant fact surprising to the medical fraternity, emerging from this perspective, is that the ear is regarded in the Qur'an as a superior organ of sensory input in the human than the eye. Whenever the Qur'an describes the creation of *homo sapiens*, the ear word-frequency rate is almost twice that of the eye.⁹⁶ And whenever the creation of man is mentioned, it is the ear which is placed before vision. To Muslims, the greatest calamity that one could suffer is to be deaf. The blind could still memorise the Qur'an and ensure themselves of a high status in society as a '*hafiz*' or *qari*, a public chanter of the Qur'an. Kay Gardner cites the observation that the hearing is the first sensory function to develop in the womb and fully functional at five months gestation, and the last to disappear at death.⁹⁷ Biologically the ear has many more interlinking networks than the eye, and thus more readily creates physiological effects than the eye. Trances or altered states of consciousness are one of these effects, which are principally effected by the ear.⁹⁸ A single word can elicit such a severe response that it has often led to death. Roguet cites several cases amongst the Companions of the Prophet, where audition of Qur'anic verses led to 'fainting, sobbing

⁹⁵Naguib al-Attas, *Islam, Secularism and Modernism of the Future*. (London: Mansell, 1979), 212.

⁹⁶ Concordance of Mohammed Fu'ad al Baqi, *Mu'ajam al-Mufahris li alfaẓ al-Qur'an. al-Karim* (Cairo Dar al-Fikr, 1945) s.v. *s-m*.

⁹⁷Kay Gardner, *Sounding the Inner Landscape*, 226.

⁹⁸Kay Gardiner's latest work on 'Music as Medicine' quotes the musicologist Joachim Ernst Berendt's citation of anthropologist Jakob Bachofen, as early as 1880 saying we are moving out of the era of the sensory dominance of the eye, (which he equates with patriarchal culture), into antecedent primal matriarchal cultures that were focussed on hearing and not seeing. *Sounding the Inner Landscape: Music as Medicine*. (London: Element Books. 1997): 226. Gilbert Roger's work is also apposite, except that he still believes in chthonic elements being in resonance with the melody to explain the psychological states of 'possession'.

and dying'.⁹⁹

The use of a stage

For a dramatic presentation a stage is usually sited in a room or hall. The 'astana' was a large carpeted room in Shahsaheb's residence. In one corner was the *suffah* (platform), a sacred space.¹⁰⁰ In the other was a display cabinet containing stacks of prayer manuals which were kept for specific occasions. On one wall was a vast number of photographs of the 'mazars' (shrines) of the saints to which Shahsaheb had affiliation. Looking down from high up were framed of coloured photographs of the founders of this particular sodality. It seemed as if these *khalifas* watched benignly upon the performers. This is not usually done because of the proscription on depiction of the human form either in art or photography. The rejoinder to this was that these images were not for worship, and the prohibition did not apply to photographic images, as the term was not existent in the Prophet's time, but actually referred to *tamathil*, the graven statutes created for worship. Since the *Ratib* was performed in a room, flags were draped across the walls with various invocations to the heads of the different spiritual orders. The inscriptions were strung across walls in various colours.

The stage which marks of a 'sacred space' ranges from a raised platform when it is called the *takiyah*.¹⁰¹ It is also either simple or decorated, but without any curtains as Shubel has described in the *taz' iyyah*.¹⁰² In the *taz' iyya' h* it marks off sacred time which is historical. In the *Ratib* it marks off a liminal moment or 'hal' a spiritual state. In the *Ratib* at Cape Town the audience were crowded into the sacred area. Shahsaheb had warned that everyone had to be in a state of ritual purity *wudu*.

The recital of the *tahlil*

⁹⁹ Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A theory of the Relations between Music and Possession*. (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1984), 259. His entire chapter on Music and Trance amongst the Arabs is a compendium of works on Music by writers such as al-Ghazzali, and provides some rare insights into the psychological effects of Qur'anic recitation, of music and *sam'a*.

¹⁰⁰The 'platform' refers to a seating bench the Prophet used in his mosque in Medina for the Early Companions. The term *astana* (Pers.) refers to a threshold, or doorway to a sacred space, and is common in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent.

¹⁰¹Richard Martin, *Islamic Studies*, 196.

¹⁰²Peter J. Chelkowski, *Taxi'eh: Ritual and Drama in Iran* (New York: SUNY, 1979), 4.

The *tahlil* is the Testimony or *shahada* is regarded as a cardinal component of the *Dhikr*. Schuon calls it a double testimony as it consists of two phrases without the conjunction *waw*.¹⁰³ The first half deals with belief: denial and rejection of idolatry, (*La*), and second is the affirmation (*'ilah*) of the existence of Allah. The second phrase deals with the testification of Muhammad (SAW) as a Prophet and Messenger of Allah. The profession of it renews one's faith and the sacred words possess power.¹⁰⁴ Hence it is used for healing rituals. It is also used during mental illness. Muhasibi suggested that a person loses rationality in speech and behaviour when three centres in his personality become dissociated.¹⁰⁵ These three centres were delineated by him as consisting of the *ruh*, the *qalb* and the *nafs*. Another view is that psychoses result when the links of a person with his creator are separated or broken.¹⁰⁶ The *Tahlil* cements the link between the world of the Creator and the created. Auditions of tapes of the Qur'anic recital, which is the *verbum Dei* have been shown at the Psychiatric Institute in Taif, Saudi Arabia to heal psychoses where modern treatment had failed.¹⁰⁷

The centrality of the Qur'an

The Qur'an is the central theophany of Islam. When Muslims open the Qur'an, it is as if they are holding the sacred in their hands. Therefore utmost reverence is accorded to it. It is kept in a raised place, touched only by those 'purified' by ablution, and recited in a sonorous voice. There is Hadith Qudsi which states: Someone who reads the Qur'an is as if he is talking to Me and I were talking with him.¹⁰⁸ This is evidence that the reader enters into communication with the Sacred, which is the function of a shaman. Just as the *salat* is a vehicle or technique for producing ecstasy,

¹⁰³Frithjof Schuon, *Understanding Islam* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, (1989), 16.

¹⁰⁴ Schimmel, *Phenomenology*, 153.

¹⁰⁵al-Muhasibi described the linkages and severing of the bonds by certain acts or lack of ritual action leading to separation of the mental centres. Deikman's analogous theory of dissociation has been supplanted by the biochemical revolution in Psychiatry. See Chapter 6.

¹⁰⁶This link is established when the 'sacred breath' is instilled into him, according to the Qur'anic *Surah al Hijr* 15:29.

¹⁰⁷ Hashmi Ali Jilani, *An Introduction to Islamic Psychiatry* (Lahore: Zavia Books, 1978).

¹⁰⁸ Schimmel, *Phenomenology*, 157.

reading or hearing the Qur'an also produces a similar reaction. One of the cardinal features of the Qur'an is its 'melodious' aural recitation, and McClain, an ethnomusicologist has observed that oral recitation engenders harmonics which cause an altered state of consciousness.¹⁰⁹

When the Qur'an is being recited, it contains an admonition. 'Be silent and listen' and equally insistent with regard to its recitation 'in measured tones'.¹¹⁰ He observes that 'when the Qur'an is reduced to writing, we diminish our own world and falsify Muhammad's'. The Qur'an therefore also has no liturgical validity when read as a book.¹¹¹ If the Qur'an is translated, it is liturgically incorrect and thus has no ritual efficacy.¹¹²

The role of the Drum

The oldest instrument known to man is the drum, its body having originally been made from tree shells. The tree 'in early African animistic cultures represents the human being's centre of magical consciousness'.¹¹³ Eliade states that the drum 'has the role of the first importance in shamanistic ceremonies. Its symbolism is complex and its magical functions many and various'.¹¹⁴ It is stated to be indispensable for conducting the shaman to the 'centre of the world' and for flying through the air.¹¹⁵ One of the informants stated that the drum is the main instrument which results in the effect of the *dhikr*. Nicholson cites Abu Sai'd Abi 'l Khayr, a renowned and accomplished mystic,

¹⁰⁹ Ernest McClain, *Meditations through the Qur'an: Tonal Images in an Oral Culture* (Maine: Nicolas Hays, 1981)

¹¹⁰ *Surah al-Muzzamil*. 73:4: 'And recite the Qur'an in a loud but melodious voice'.

¹¹¹ William Stoddart, *Sufism: The Mystical Doctrines and Methods of Islam* (Delhi: Taj Press, 1983), 26.

¹¹² Frithjof Schuon, *Understanding Islam*, 49.

¹¹³ Kay Gardner, *Sounding the Inner Landscape*, 184.

¹¹⁴ Eliade, *Shamanism*, 168

¹¹⁵ Eliade, *Shamanism*, 168. None of the *Ratib* informants had offered to explain the exact role of the drums. Desai has measured the beats, and concludes that because of the wide variation of the 'music' he could not make a proper notation. Desai, *Thesis*, 481.

who frequently flew through the air.¹¹⁶ Richard Katz was informed that a *khoisan* visited his daughter some distance away.

Shahsaheb described that at a previous function held by him the disciples flew through the air. During the peak of the performance of the Ratib, the most experienced performer gestured that the drummers should beat louder and motioned with his hands that the reciters should raise their voices. This means that he was aware of the surroundings, despite being in an altered state. When questioned about this, he stated that the sound of the drum and the amplitude of the recital penetrates his very being and he becomes oblivious to everything else. He certainly seemed to be in a daze, unseeing, with glazed eyes.

This has often being mistaken as being due to the ingestion of drugs. Having seen him long before the function commenced, this allegation can certainly be dismissed. Gardner classifies tambourines as having an indefinite pitch, according to the manner of striking it. Desai could not annotate the beat and method in his thesis. The drum played by hand has a greater effect than that of electronic keyboards as elicited by Gardner.¹¹⁷ Shahsaheb was particular about the skin used in the tambourines used by his disciples.

The Shaman and the Journeys of the Prophet.

Izutsu is adamant that a comparison between a shaman and the Prophet's (S.A.W.) journey (*me'raj*) cannot be made since there is a vast difference between the achievements of the Prophet (S.A.W.) and the shaman. The Shaman was possessed by a spirit, a *Jinn* or whatever, and thus it spoke through him, making language a two way communication, A to B, whilst, the Revelation to the Prophet was a three-person structure, Allah, Gabriel and Muhammad. (S.A.W.)¹¹⁸ Eliade concurs by pointing out that we cannot compare the Prophet's ascension and night journey with that of the Shaman, as

¹¹⁶R. A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge: C.U.P, [1921] 1967), 14.

¹¹⁷Kay Gardner, *Sounding the Inner Landscape*, 185.

¹¹⁸Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Qur'an. Semantics of the Koranic Weltanschauung*. (Tokyo: Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1964), 175ff. He gives an excellent review of pagan arab beliefs on communication between demons and humans, and differentiates between these and Revelation *Waby*.

the Indo-European religions were far richer in cultural innovations and creations.¹¹⁹

The Qur'anic status of *dhikr*

The Qur'an has numerous reference to *dhikr*, the remembrance of Allah. However, any sacred act can be considered to be a remembrance. The liturgical term refers to the iteration of selected words, phrases and passages from the Qur'an, with two methods for their recital, either private and silent, *khafi* or public and loud *jahri*. The invocations of *dhikr* accords with the following verses: When my Servant asks concerning me; I am near, I answer the supplicant when he calls upon Me. In another verse an unequivocal promise is made to the supplicant: Call upon Me, I shall certainly answer you; To Allah belong the Most Beautiful Names, therefore call upon Me by these names. The 'fa' is emphatic, making the distinction between mere recital, with the definite article compared to the imperative to call upon him. Most of the prayer manuals on the Ninety Names make this distinction when prescribing the names for various needs of the devotee.

The *dhikr* invokes the sacred persons in the *silsilah* who present themselves to the disciples, who lend their protection over the group, often extending to the audience. This would explain the fact that minors and non-believers could join in the ritual, without being initiated or being participants. The 'sacred presence' is termed *sakinah* in the Qur'an, and a deformation has occurred in most of the translations of the Qur'an which call it 'tranquillity'.

Iterated Sound

The iteration of the various Adhkar, some into odd numbers, can be substantiated by Alain Danielo's observation that the scale of 5, 7, and 11 times in all the regions of the world produced trance states. (Unesco courier) Gilbert Rouget differs in claiming that 'there is evidence that the square rhythms in 4 or 8 time also produce hypnotic effects'.¹²⁰ The word Allah itself is bi-syllabic, but is composed of four letters. A recent work by the German physicist, chemist and pharmacist, Peter Plichta demonstrates 'in flawless mathematics' that God's secret formula operates in

¹¹⁹ Eliade, *Shamanism*, 376-7.

¹²⁰ Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance*, 90.

prime number code.¹²¹ Perhaps of greater significance than prime number iterations is the fact of harmonics.

S H Nasr in a review of McClain's *Tonal Images in an Oral culture* offers a philosophical 'reduction': 'The individual is transported by a sacred sound, the word of God, its chanting rhythmic beat fills both the space and the heart (mind) and transforms the 'matrix of ordinary life into vibrations of the Divine presence'.

The Recital of the *salawat*

The recital of the salutations to the Prophet is a Qur'anic imperative according to the verse: 'Surely Allah and his angels send salutations to the ^{SAW}*Nabi*. O! those of you who believe, send blessings and the best of salutations to him.' The qualifying word 'Believers' differentiates the pious from those who pay mere lip service to Islam, i.e. *Muslims* from those who affirm belief in their heart, i.e. *Mu'mins*. The Hadith enjoins the recital of the *salawat* at the beginning and end of every *munajat* or *dua* (plea) and if not done, renders the prayer 'remaining suspended between heaven and earth'. One of the Shaikhs was quite emphatic that it is the *salawat* which lends sacrality to the Ratib and results in 'power'. There are numerous attributions for this power resource, deriving it from the Prophetic *Sunnah*, down the chain *silsilah* of the saints, to the present shaikhs, or to the 'sacred presence'.¹²² The eulogies to the founder of the spiritual order, of which that of Abdul Qadir Jilani is the most numerous, also has an affinity to the *salawat* which is panegyric.

Variations in Recited Text

Previous works remark on the considerable mobility and variation in the texts

¹²¹Peter Plichta, *God's Secret Formula: Deciphering the Riddle of the Universe and the Prime Number Code* (London: Element Books, 1997).

¹²²Kalim Siddiqui, *In Pursuit of the Power of Islam* (London: Open Press, 1996), 88-89. Although his work is from a political perspective, it contains a succinct analysis of Islam as a power-resource, the reason for the 'hysteria amongst the West against Islam'... 'the Islamic Movement and all its subsystems is a 'behavioural system' which has its own goals and norms to regulate its own behaviour and that of its members, and the ability to resist pressures from its environment. Indeed the behavioural system must be so well organised and adjusted to its environment that the norms and values of its behaviour become irresistible to others.

recited.¹²³ The recitals of Bagdad differ in the order, of the Qur'anic Surahs and phrases, and include a *Qasida* an encomium, to the founder of the order. At the Cape he is only mentioned occasionally, whereas the founder of the Qaderi school Abdul Qadir Jilani is frequently invoked and eulogised.¹²⁴

The power of the Shaikh

Shahsaheb stated that although empowered by his *Shuyukh*, he did not perform the *Ratib* himself but acted as an imam, or *Murshid*, a Conductor of the ceremony. He could feel the exact moment when his disciples were ready to 'perform'. He felt a 'presence'. When on one occasion during the ceremony he invited me to approach closer to the novices, and I sat on the platform holding the skewers and daggers, he motioned that I was not permitted to be in that particular consecrated area.

Private and public dramatic *rawatibs*

Schubel has coined the phrase 'household' *rawatib* and the public *ratib*, whilst our preference for the term 'precursors' of the fully developed public performance is problematical.¹²⁵ The *ratibs* which are private functions, held at homes, and whose composition is described by Osman bin Bakar, consist of an arrangement (*r-t-b* to arrange) of a litany for private or public purposes, but the *Ratib* is held at a public place, as a dramatic presentation.¹²⁶

¹²³ Desai remarks that he had difficulty in analysing the rhythms of the *dhikr* and drums as there were so many variations. This flexibility of the recitals further supports a biological effect of sound rather than specific recitals. The vital element according to the Shaikh is the 'protection or presence' of the spiritual masters which causes the phenomenon, rather than any musical instrument.

¹²⁴ The text and some translations of several Recitals in South Africa, including a translation of the *Qasida*, which considerable problems as some of the verses were unintelligible to a native Arabic student.

¹²⁵ It is to be noted that for taxonomical purposes, the term precursors are employed to distinguish between earlier simple forms of the ritual of *dhikr*, as compared to the 'dramatic' form of the ritual as in the *Ratib*. Both forms are coexistent. Schubel differentiates the simpler forms as 'household rituals' whilst the developed, dramatic forms as 'public rituals'. I have attended and spoken at numerous of these household rituals, which were open to members of the public.

¹²⁶ Osman bin Bakar, 'Sufism in the Malay-Indonesian World' in *Islamic Spirituality* Vol. 2, (London: SCM Press, 1991), 259-303.

The former is always followed by a meal (*niyyaz* lit blessed), whilst the dramatic counterpart usually has no food distribution. Depending upon the Order, the *rawatibs* bear the names of their founders, the *Ratib al Barzanji*, the '*Alawi* are more popular, whilst the *Haddad* has a majority following at the Cape. This word is corrupted to *gadad* at the Cape.

Origins of the *Rawatibs*

In the late ninth century, Schimmel recounts of a blacksmith (*haddad*) engaged at his anvil, listening to a ratib of a blind reciter, and becoming so engrossed in the recital, that he withdrew a molten horse-shoe from the fire with his bare hands.¹²⁷ When he realised the implication of the phenomenon, he requested the blind reciter for his composition, and the *Ratib al haddad* thus spread all over the world. A local publication of their recital, which is quite popular has been printed at Cape Town.¹²⁸

Household *rawatibs* are held by both men and women, on a weekly basis. I attended a women's *Ratib* held in Rylands at the home of Mrs Badruddin. I was invited to address them on the benefits of *dhikr*, in coping with stress. Followers of the Chistiyya School also hold a ratib ceremony on fixed days after '*Esha* prayers. I attended one held at the residence of Dr Abdul Kadir Jaffer of 82 Flat Road, Athlone. This was combined with the *agyarwin sharif*, the eleventh being the death anniversary of Abdul Qadir Jilani, the saint. It is also read for the founder of the Chistiya Order.

Women and the *Ratib*

The women are more zealous about performing the *Rawatib*, because they can participate more fully in them and it develops a community spirit amongst them. Principally it inculcates devotionism. So many of the participants have intimated that they have a feeling of tranquillity after the ceremony, and plenitude *baraqah* ensues till the next recital. Every participant brings *niyaz*, food, which is distributed in little parcels which the attendees take home. Like the *Shi'a* ritual, it enables women to derive the benefits of a religious ceremony, which fosters closer ties with friends and neighbours, brings the community together in a ritual which strengthens faith, and also

¹²⁷ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 180.

¹²⁸ Shaikh M.A. Jassiem, *Ratib Oel Gadad* (Cape Town: al-Asaas Publication, 1979). With English translation and transliteration by Hassiem Hasheme.

serves as an educational instrument as so many of the verses are repeated, in lilting tones, rising to a ringing crescendo which seems to lift the darkness away.

The trance is an epiphenomenon of a much more complex interaction between vast physiological networks, and is explained as the presence of the holy Ones. A *murid* Dawood said that he actually felt someone being in the room. He has never seen anything, nor seen any flashes of light. In none of the many subjects questioned were there entoptics present. This contrasts with the Khoisan trances induced by drugs, which is typically projected as therianthropes, and consisting of zigzag lines, and *mandalas*, form constants. Entoptics are drug related, which means the Khoisan did some of their art under the influence of drugs.

Comparative aspects of the ritual- complex

The *ratib* is termed the *slametan* in the Malaysian Archipelago, which literally stands for *salamet*, security, peace and tranquillity. It is probably derived from the fact that these *rawatib* rituals engender tranquillity. The distribution of food and feeding the public which is a major function of the *Slametan* does not occur in *Ratib al Rifa'iyah*. It is understood as a distribution of *baraqah* (plenitude) and draws the participants into a complex web of relationships with their neighbours, the women and children taking active part in assisting with the menial tasks of cooking and serving. The ritual wards off evil. The protection offered is due to the apotropaic function of the Qur'an: 'Evil cannot abide the *sound* of the Qur'an'.

The Ratib as ritual has also a therapeutic function, and is used in exorcism and healing. Sometimes it is also used for divination, which the shaikh alone performs, or advances the method for *istikharah*, divination through invoking a dream. A major function of the *ratib* is that it re-contextualises the Hadith, in order to establish Islam as a basis for social and ritual behaviour, and it transforms a pre-existing group into a religious community, i.e. conversion to Islam through its rituals. Trimingham's observation on Islam in Africa are apposite because he states that it is the rituals which first attract the heathens to Islam, rather than dogma, and this is fully borne out by the role of the *Ratib*.¹²⁹

The contrasts between the *rawatibs* and the *ratib al rifa'iyah* are that the

¹²⁹S. J. Trimingham, *Islam in Africa* (London: SPCK, 1984), 42.

founders of the spiritual order vary, thus the verbal aspects will differ. In terms of linguistic competence, the terminology, and the performance differ. The *rawatibs* are private (household) and communal, everyone participates, whilst the *Ratib* is a dramatic presentation, where the audience does not participate, but remains out of the sacred circle within which the ritual is practised. There is a barrier between the actors, the Imam and the audience. There is no barrier of *die bank* in the *Slametan*, where the prayer manuals are placed on two raised cushions in the centre or side of a room. Food distribution is not the main purpose of the *Ratib al Rifa'iyah*, in the *slametan* it is cardinal. The central focus of the *Ratib* is to inculcate the 'presence of the sacred' *sakina* via media of holy people to assist, i.e. empowerment, to perform miracles whilst the *slametan* is for plenitude.

In the *slametan* there was royal patronage as in the Buddhist rituals, whilst the *ratib* has no royal patronage. It is organised by laity, anyone can participate and no initiation is needed as in the *Ratib al Rifa'iyah*. Both males and females can participate, whilst in the *Ratib* only males are allowed. The *Slametan* rarely evokes trance states, whilst it is a requirement in the *Ratib al Rifa'iyah*.¹³⁰

The Ratib and the Ta'ziyyah

The nexus between the *ratib* and the *ta'ziyyah* can be elicited by observing the many parallels but also marked disparities between the two rituals, although both belong to the genre of drama. The *ta'ziyyah* is more organised, it does not allow for variance because it conforms to a major historical narrative element, to relive the tragic event and sufferings of the Prophet's family. The *Ratib* relives the experience of its founder in Medina. A primary outcome of the *ta'ziyyah* is to to re-awaken consciousness amongst the masses, very often illiterate, and poor. The scholastics therefore perceived the ritual to be a 'folk' exercise of entertainment. The *Ratib* is considered to be an *ayat*, a miraculous sign, to make people ponder over the performance and to make them god-conscious, to think about the miracle of creation that is man, who alone has the ability to invoke the sacred *sakina*.

The marked difference in the verbal aspects, plus the self mutilation of the

¹³⁰ Woodworth, *Slametan in Java*, 233.

ta'ziyyah, where blood sacrifice is essential, makes the *Ratib* to be orthogonal, since blood is regarded as an imperfection in observance of the ritual, requiring a re-enactment of the ablution ritual, and special prayers are utilised to stop haemorrhage. In the *ta'ziyyah*, blood is a welcome sign of salvific redemption. In the textual elements, the *Ratib* consists of more Qur'anic elements than the *ta'ziyyah*, more *tahlil* and less accent on Ali or his martyred son, Hussein and his family. No mourning takes place in the *Ratib*, which is central to the *Muharram* ceremonies.

The *Ratib* has very little reference to Ali, excepting that one Shaikh had the invocation engraved on his 'bank', but much more on the spiritual master, Abdul Qadir Jilani. Depending on the spiritual affiliations of the Shaikh, Qur'anic invocations remain similar, but the eulogies to other spiritual masters are included. Both rites originated in spiritual retreats, (*takiya*) and are condemned by the Sunni theologians, eg Ibn Kathir is quite specific that the *ta'ziyyah* is a 'reprehensible innovation', whilst surprisingly, Ibn Khaldun, whom Toynbee called the Father of history, remarked that Imam Hussein committed a grave error in defying the Banu Ummayah- that he should have abandoned his struggle for a just, accountable and theocratic government, and accepted the hereditary succession of governance instituted by Mu'awiya.¹³¹

The flags used in the *Ratib* are derived from those used at Kerbala, and are paraded through the streets in the *ta'ziyyah*, whilst in the *Ratib*, the stage is festooned with them. The chains which are present in many *Ratibs* denotes the fetters of the mundane world which have to cast away in order to achieve spiritual ascendance, whilst in the *ta'ziyyah* they symbolise the event of the Prophet's family being led in chains to the then capital, Damascus all the way from Kerbala. It is also symbolic of a protest against the 'real Islam being enslaved,' to serve the dynastic rulers. Another feature derived from the *Ta'ziyyah* utilised in the public *Ratib* is the demonstration or *julus*, which is no longer done in Cape Town, but performed in Durban as Fatima Meer has shown. She has some illustrations of a street parade in Durban.¹³²

It is worth repeating that the first *Ratib* was performed as a street

¹³¹This is a 'political' judgement, since Ibn Khaldun was in the service of the government.

¹³² Meer, *Portrait of Indian South Africans*, 201, 205.

demonstration in Cape Town, dissimulated as 'entertainment' since the public expression of Islam was banned on pain of death. It can thus be regarded, as the first protest ritual by the slaves in South Africa, employing theatre. The chains which are prominent feature in the *Zurkhaneh* are also present in some of the local *Ratib*, such as Imam Gafieldien, but their use and fire displays with them are diminishing. Heavy chains were a prominent feature in the *zurkhanah* ritual observed in Bakhtiyar province in Iran.

Use of the fire displays, occurs both in the *Ta'ziyyah* and to a lesser extent in the *Ratib*. Du Plessis reports on the manipulation of red hot chains.¹³³ This is rarely done today. At Gausia Manzil an informant told me of the performance of the *Ratib* in 1989, where the devotees who were from India, dipped their hands in oil, and then slid them along molten chains suspended from the stage. The oil burst into flames but they were unharmed. They went around the audience showing that their palms were ice-cold.

There is a slight change in the sacraments described by Du Plessis, as the devotees wore red fezzes, whilst today knitted caps are worn. But in many respects the *Ratib* as described by du Plessis is similar to that done today. Lady Gordon-Duff mentions the *kham*s which is fee paid to the Imam at the Cape, where a small donation is deposited into a collection box at the mosque for use by the imam or for the mosque.¹³⁴

The composition of the recitals are almost similar with one major difference. Instead of eulogies to the spiritual head, in the *Zurkhaneh* ritual *Ya Ali* was recited followed by *Ya Madad*. Abdul Jabbar's 'bank' had *Ya madat* inscribed on it which reveals a slight deformation but which is further substantiation of *Shi'a* influence in the *Ratib*. At the Cape, the visits to the *Karamats* are well documented by Mukaddam and in the book on the shrines of the saints, as stressed upon in *Shi'a* rites.¹³⁵ The word

¹³³ I. Du Plessis, *The Cape Malays*. (Cape Town: Balkema. 1972), 23-26. A very good descriptive narrative on the *Ratib*.

¹³⁴ Lady Duff-Gordon, *Letters from the Cape* (London: Oxford, 1820).

¹³⁵ S. H. Nasr, *Islamic Spirituality* 2 (London: SCM, 1994), 171.

kramat used at the Cape also shows deformation, it should be '*karamat*' (pl.) because the word denotes a 'miracle' performed by the shaikh rather than a shrine.

Stabbing by daggers differs in their use in the *ta'ziyyah* and the *Ratib*. The name of the ceremony, *zangir ka matam* (mourning by daggers) has a similar phenomenon to stabbing by daggers in the *Ratib*. The *Shi'a* however, have to draw blood. This practice is now frowned upon, and blood donations are being advised in Iran. The demonstrations are street theatre used as an educational tool, as it re-enacts the tragedy at Kerbala. The *Ratib* also utilised theatre for education of the audience, for a re-awakening of the spiritual superiority of Islam, and an exposition of the spiritual achievements by the performers.

The *Zurkhanah* and the *Ratib*

The *Zurkhaneh* ritual had a similar 'bank' for storing the instruments as the *Ratib*. Because it looked like a doorway it was called the *darwish*, which we have stated earlier is actually a portal, a doorway to enlightenment. The entrance *darwazah* serves to separate the devotees from the Master, who sits behind it, and directs the disciples. One informant said that it was the entrance *madkhal* through which the sacred presences appeared under the safety of the *Tahlil* which is usually inscribed on the lintel. When Schimmel describes the 'presence' as '*buruz*', or exteriorisation' which enabled the sacred presence to appear, it is clearly misnamed.¹³⁶ It was through the presence of *sakina* that the Prophet disappeared or was invisible to the wife of Abu Lahab, against whom a specific Surah *Lahab* was revealed which cursed him. She had a stone in her hand, and whilst the Prophet was standing next to Abubakr near the *Ka'aba* still enquired about him, threatening to smash his head with it. When she left, Abubakr asked about this and was told by the Prophet that he had become invisible by

¹³⁶ '*Sakinah*' or sacred presence is a heirophany, whilst Suhrawardi describes it as 'state'. W.M. Thackston, Jr. (trans) *The Mystical Treatises of Shihabuddin Yahya Suhrawardi* (London: Octagon Press. 1982), 93. 'One who has *sakinah* can read men's thoughts and knows also unseen things...the *sakinah* speaks through Umar's tongue' referring to the incident when Umar, whilst delivering the Friday Sermon *Khutbah*, suddenly interrupted it with the announcement: 'Ya Saria al-Jabl.' thus preventing an attack from the rear. The General heard his voice in Syria and averted defeat.

Allah placing a veil before her eyes.¹³⁷ This latter aspect would also explain how it is possible for the Shaikh to appear at several functions held all over the world at the same time. Legend speaks of Rumi having attended seventeen parties at one time, and writing a poem at each.¹³⁸ The saint was also capable of coming to the aid of the disciple, to cure him or provide comfort in times of need. Schimmel relates that she had heard of these 'miracles' often during her stay in Turkey.

Flags as historical symbols

Flags which are a feature of the *Ta'ziyyah* have analogues in the Ratib. Flags of various hues, each symbolic of the colour, experienced by the founders is a distinctive feature. The Black flag was the flag made from the black cloak of Ayesha before the attack on the fort at Khaibar, the Red flag is associated with that of Ibn Abbas at Kerbala, the yellow, the colour experienced by the *Chistiyya* and the saffron is the colour of the *Naqshbandiyya*. The green is the colour of the *Qadiriyya*. Blue is a sign of mourning for the separation of the contingent from the Source.¹³⁹ Depending on the spiritual affiliations of the Master, different flags are displayed. Flags are a very prominent feature of the *Ta'ziyyah* julus, demonstrations. Protection from fire is attributed to the light of the Prophet, since the Qur'an describes him as *sirajun munira*, an illuminating sun. It is said that after the Prophet had wiped the perspiration from his face, the handkerchief was protected from burning 'for it was impregnated with the light of Prophethood'.¹⁴⁰

Recognition of the status of *tariqa* in Islam

Nasr remarks that 'very few Western scholars of Islam have realised that the

¹³⁷ Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shades of the Qur'an*. (London: Taha Publications, 1979), 347.

¹³⁸ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 205.

¹³⁹ "The Prophet left three things: poverty, knowledge, and the sword. The sword was taken by potentates, who misused it; the knowledge was chosen by savants, who were satisfied with merely teaching it, poverty was chosen by the dervishes, who made it a means of empowering themselves. I wear blue as a sign of mourning for the calamity of these three classes of men. al-Hujwiri, *Kashf al-Mahjub*, in R.A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (London: Luzac, 1923), vi.

¹⁴⁰ Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger* (Carolina: U.N.C, 1985), 78.

roots of *tariqah* lie in the Qur'an'.¹⁴¹ Recently, however there are many authors, initiated by Soderbloem, Tor Andrae, William Chittick, Frans Schuon, Martin Lings, Henri Corbin, Margoliouth, Sachito Murata and Massignon, who have acknowledged the primacy of *tasawwuf* over law in Islam.¹⁴² Whilst the Qur'an is the source of doctrine, law and method (ritual) it is primarily the 'central theophany of Islam'.¹⁴³ It will therefore have esoteric elements as well. Its revelation is uniquely and entirely a religious experience of Muhammad. (SAW)

There are many definitions of *sufism* by its exponents, depending upon their own experiences. The term has been corrupted to mean the follower of a spiritual or esoteric dimension of Islam. Nasr remarks that the term *Sufi* is a corruption of *Tasawwuf*, and a western construct and refers to *Sufis* as 'imposters'. Anyone calling himself a *Sufi* is not one. The status of *Sufism* within *Sunnism* is that the latter is a more legalistic and literalistic expression, and the *Wahabi* interpretation most radically so. Thus it is a later development from the Prophetic Islam, whose origins were from an aural experience, and thus emotional. Once the Qur'an was codified, the visual rather than the aural perception became dominant, cognitive rationalist elements predominated, and all emotive links, such as the love and attachment to the Prophet or other metaphors such as the saints, were denigrated as being against rationalism and pure monotheism.¹⁴⁴ However, many *Sunni* Muslims are members of *Sufi* Orders such as the *Qadriyyah*, the *Shadhiliyyah*, the '*Alawiyyah*', the *Tijanniyyah*, the *Chistiyyah* and the *Naqshbandiyyah*.¹⁴⁵ In certain countries such as in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, the South Eastern Asian countries, North, South and East and West

¹⁴¹ S. H. Nasr, *Ideals and Realities in Islam* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1975), 127

¹⁴² S. H. Nasr, *Ideals and Realities in Islam*, 127-8. The popular scholar Karen Armstrong in her magnum opus *History of God* and her biography of the Prophet, entitled *Muhammad* deserves special mention for having a balanced view of the role of esoteric elements in Islam.

¹⁴³ S. H. Nasr, *Ideals and Realities in Islam*, 65.

¹⁴⁴ It is salient to note that the *Shahada* is dual, one to Allah and the other to Muhammad, representing Belief and Behaviour *uswa*, the Exemplar.

¹⁴⁵ Mansoor Jaffer, ed. *The Kramats of the Cape*. Also in Javid Nurbaksh. 'The *Nematullahi*' in Nasr ed, *Islamic Spirituality*, Vol. 2, 158.

Africa south of the Sahara there are *Sufi* fraternities and shrines. Many saints buried there are frequently visited.

In South Africa the shrines play a very distinctive role in Muslim piety. The brochure *Kramats of the Western Cape* issued by the Cape Mazar Society lists 23 shrines, one being situated on Robben Island.¹⁴⁶ The etiquette on visiting the *mazar* and the reverence which is due to the saint is fully explained. In a message to the Society, the President of the Muslim Judicial Council states that his organisation fully supports 'Sufism and its tenets'. Natal has a greater number of shrines than the Transvaal. Due to corrupt practices amongst some members of *sufism* in the Transvaal, such as neglect of the performance of *salat*, they have 'earned for themselves the wrath of the orthodox Sunni community'.¹⁴⁷

Annemarie Schimmel regards Muhammad as 'defining the borders of Islam as a religion' as the invocation of his name is conjoined to the Attestation of faith (the *Shahada*). A monotheistic definition of Islam would therefore be an inadequate description of the religion of Islam. Prophetic elements of behaviour *Sunnah* serving as a 'model' *Uswa* are a vital essential dimension in Islam, without which it is reduced like the previous Abrahamic traditions to a 'textual' interpretation with all its pitfalls, and deficiencies of emulative behaviour. Because of the aphorism, 'the winners rewrite history', the 'deformation' of the image of Muhammad is prevalent both in the Occident and the Orient. In the West, until recent times, the exception was Tor Andrea's empathetic *Die person Muhammad in lehre und glaupe seiner Gemeinde*.¹⁴⁸

Karen Armstrong's *Muhammad* is a modern work and is outstanding because the *Sirah* is based on Prophecy as an experience. In recent times there is an exponential increment of translations on Islamic Mysticism.¹⁴⁹ It is tragic therefore

¹⁴⁶The shrine of Tuan Matara.

* ¹⁴⁷A. K. Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence in South Africa* (Cape Town: UCT., 1996).

¹⁴⁸English Translation by Theophil Menzel, *Mohammed: The Man and his Faith*. (London: Allen Unwin, 1956).

¹⁴⁹ Notable are works by William Chittick, Martin Lings, Carl Ernst, Jules Lawrence, John Renard, William Stoddard, Henri Corbin, and Margaret Armstrong. Annemarie Schimmel has
(continued...)

that in the Islamic countries, the approaches to the person of Muhammad SAW are mostly historical, whilst the experiential elements of Muhammad SAW's life have been entirely and intentionally overlooked, since in Saudi Arabia in particular, Islam is based on a historical Muhammad SAW rather than the essentially Spiritual.¹⁵⁰ This perspective also effects translations and interpretation of the Qur'an which rebounds on expression.¹⁵¹ Constance Padwick's work on *Muslim Devotions* comprises more prayers, probably ninety percent and invocations prevalent in *Sufi* rituals, than the normal liturgical prescribed prayers, affirms our standpoint.¹⁵²

The Qur'an itself describes Muhammad SAW as a 'beautiful model' *Uswatan husnanah*, in 33:21, so that contemporary works have called for emulation of Muhammad SAW's piety, his actions as a 'message of revolution and change, as a call for social justice and democracy, and for intellectual progress'.¹⁵³ However these works barely touch on spiritual development. The Qur'an is replete with such imperatives based on *tazkiyyah* spiritual progress. It is to be noted that the scholastics have

(...continued)

produced some eminent works such as *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* and *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam*. Her earlier work *And Muhammad is His Messenger*, deals exhaustively with rituals venerating the Prophet.

¹⁵⁰ Shubel's remark that 'the winner rewrite history' is particularly apt for the plethora of biographies emerging in the modern Islamic world which discount the mystical or spiritual elements of Muhammad's life. A prize-winning work by an Indian entitled *ar-Rabeeq al-Makhtum* (The Sealed Nectar 1995) was awarded first prize on Biography of Muhammad by the World Muslim League based in Makkah in 1979, relates only the barest essentials on the experiences regarding the Revelation, or on the dream in *Surah al Fath* predicting that the Prophet would indeed enter Makkah, and also assuring him that Islam would prevail over other other 'ways' for mankind, or on the *me'raj*. No other Scripture of mankind has predicted it own preponderance.

¹⁵¹ The much vaunted English translation of the Qur'an: *The Noble Qur'an in English Language* by Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan, (Riyadh: Dar as salaam, 1995) 11th Edition translates *Sakina* according to the common dictionary as 'tranquillity' rather than as an experience. Compare Karen Armstrong's exposition as 'presence' derived semantically as a religious phenomenon. Martin Lings acclaimed biography *Muhammad* is acknowledged to be an 'experiential' work. Religious experience is often the end result of *Tasawwuf* rituals. Ratib is for trance induction.

¹⁵² Constance E. Padwick, *Muslim Devotions*, 1961.

¹⁵³ Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety* (London: University North Carolina Press, 1985), 7.

expressly forbidden the performance of ritual for the sole purpose of inculcating a trance.¹⁵⁴ This factor may be the major reason for the criticism of the *Ratib* as un-Islamic. The textualist position does not countenance deviation from conformity, despite Islamic law being flexible according to socio-political reality.

The variations between the performances of the *Ratib* in diverse lands, in various towns and amongst different individuals in the same town, accords with the phenomenon of the *ta'ziyyah* in Pakistan: i.e. variation in the verbal aspects, differences in the composition, and order of the gestures, variation in competence, implying that competence is not required for the ritual to be efficacious. It accords with the observation that there is considerable flexibility in Islamic ritual, which initially leads to difficulty in decoding it. Bowen's observation of a change in the *Salat* to accord with local conditions in Indonesia, notes 'that its (Islam's) strength is because it conforms with local custom'. Schubel affirms that the great strength of Islam is in the extreme mobility of its ritual action, both private and public.¹⁵⁵

The *Ratib* can be said to have become a public ritual and possibly the first political protest ritual, since the public expression of Islam in the Cape was banned. This would be in keeping with Esposito's remark that when *shar'iah* (normative Islam) is suppressed it is *tariqah* (mystical Islam) which surfaces. It was dissimulated as entertainment, a view which still prevails in Muslim publications as late as 1994.¹⁵⁶

The *julus* is a feature of *Shi'a* ritual, as a street procession, a demonstration of loyalty to the house of Muhammad, the *Ahl Bayt*, the most important feature being the 'alams or flags which are symbols of allegiance to the Prophet's family, and especially of the events at Kerbala. Since processions are normally dedicated to a historical event, and also as a protest against the injustices perpetrated against the noble family of the Prophet, the *Ratib* street demonstration besides commemorating the 'power of

¹⁵⁴ Ansari's translation of Ibn Taymiyya's *Shari'a and Sufism* (London: Ansell, 1992).

¹⁵⁵ Schubel, *Religious Performance*, 35.

* ¹⁵⁶ M. Cassiem D'arcy, 'The *Khalifa* Display' in *Muslim News*. (December 1994).

faith over the flesh' can be regarded as a protest ritual against religious persecution.¹⁵⁷

The performers did not have to be *au fait* with any history or theology, they relied completely on their *Khalifa*. The *Khalifas* displayed various levels of competence and awareness of the historical dimension, the terminology and textual aspects of the *Ratib*. In many cases they had transcribed their own experience and textual aspects of the *Ratib* as it had been taught to them, thus it was clearly evident that the *Khalifas* of Indian origin included words and phrases of Urdu, Persian or Gujarati, whilst those having Malay roots used Malayalam and Buddhist phrases. The latter *khalifas* employed such words, termed the healing prayers 'mantra'. Shah Ali Akbar is of Indian origin and follows Indian Orders, therefore has Urdu words, and confines himself to *adhkar* from the Qur'an, but does have Persian and Gujarati words as he disclosed himself. Khalifa Omar Khan uses more Buddhist and Malay words and even supplied the reason why researchers, eg Achmad Davids were misled in calling the Ratib a Hindu Ritual, because some of converts to Islam were gurus who equated the *Dhikr* to mantra. He said that the *Chistiyya* had two branches, a *Saberi* Branch which is of Persian-Arab origin, and the *Guruwiyya* Order which had Hindu gurus as *Khalifas*. These gurus had converted to Islam, but had continued using their own traditional mantras to achieve the trance state. He stated that the meanings of these words is mystical and known only to those 'high' in spiritual knowledge. Both Tambiah, Alper and Staal insist that the mantra are meaningless.¹⁵⁸ Staal went further and declared them useless. However we advance the view that they are meaningless in a rational tradition but meaningful in context to the ritually competent.

Khalifa Umar also commented that every *kramat* (sic) has its own verbal compositions, depending upon the saint and his affiliation to its particular mystical order. All the *Khalifas* we interviewed had composed and written their own Prayer manuals which were either small pocket size ones or large folio size, whilst Shahsaheb consulted not only his own pocket manuals written in his own hand, but also a printed and beautifully bound *Ta'lim Gawthia* from India.

¹⁵⁷ Schubel, *Religious Performance*, 108.

¹⁵⁸ E. Thomas Lawson and Robert N. McCauley, *Rethinking Religion* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1990), 169.

Khalifa Omar said that the power attained by the *Khalifas* could transcend the normal course of events, but that they preferred to function as healers, exorcists, miracle workers, such as the incident of the mice at Abdul Jabbar's house. Most significant was their contribution as mosque functionaries, that of imam in leading the formal prayer, that of 'Bilal', the *muezzin* and as teacher. All of these selfless sacrifices were performed without remuneration. The Imams sometimes had other means of subsistence, be they trades such as tailoring, building, or cabinet maker. This contrasts sharply with Thillay Naidoo's plea for instruction in religion at the Hindu temples to be conducted on an organised basis.

The tripartite classification of Turner and van Gennep into separation, liminality and reaggregation, could as easily, if not better, be explained as altered states of consciousness. The division of separation could be the prodromal stage, the *adkar*, the sounds, which activate cognitiv networks, the act itself and the stabbing would represent the liminal stage, which is due to endorphin release, and the reaggregation could be the detumescence after the altered state of consciousness to a state of tranquillity or relaxation.

In the previous chapter we elicited that the entire *corpus* of ritual in Islam is structured for the production of an altered state of consciousness, starting with the Revelation of the Qur'an, *par excellence* a phenomenon of religious experience, in the postures of the *salat* which accord with Goodman's postures for attaining Alternate Reality, daily communal prayer, in the *Dhikr* as reflected in the *Rawatibs*, of which the *Ratib* is a proven exemplary, fasting with seclusion during *Ramadan*, night vigils, and feeding the poor during *Ramadan* as a social responsibility in the guise of asceticism. Edith Wyschogord defines saintly life as 'one in which compassion for the Other...is manifest, irrespective of cost to the saint'.¹⁵⁹ Schimmel has elicited that 'mysticism pervades the entire rituals of Islam,' and that Islam constitutes 'a paradigm of a 'prophetic religion' which however is tempered by a strong strand of legalism on the

¹⁵⁹ Edith Wysochord, *Saints and Postmodernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), xiii.

synonymous with attachment to an order'.¹⁶⁴ Towards the end of the eighteenth century the *sufi* orders became peripheral to Muslim social and religious life.¹⁶⁵ The most important reason however, for the reification of Islam was political hegemony rather than theological dissension.¹⁶⁶ At the Cape, there were initially no imams. Anyone capable of leading the formal prayers came to be regarded as one, since he was a ritual functionary rather than a trained scholar and a preponderance of mystically-orientated imams arose at the Cape.¹⁶⁷ The '*ulama* stood in contrast to the *Sufi* shaikhs, since they could not express any visible or emotional links with the Prophet, due to the constraints of their legal interpretations, and thus denied themselves access to the divine grace sustained by a chain of divines who through their attachment to the Prophet claimed a link with a 'living' God.¹⁶⁸ The '*ulama* who were the 'elite of canon lawyers', 'systematisers of religion and religious scholars *par excellence*', based their links through bookish erudition rather than direct experience.¹⁶⁹ They held official positions in the courts and this bifurcation produced tensions between the scholars and the saints. Geoffrey Parrinder summates the problem 'as an age-old

¹⁶⁴Gilsenan, *Saint and Sufi*, 3.

¹⁶⁵M. D. Gilsenan, 'Some Factors for the Decline of the Sufi Orders in Modern Egypt' in *Muslim World* 58, (1967), 11-18.

¹⁶⁶S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* (New York:Caravan Books, 1975).
The execution of the famed mystic al-Hallaj was also due to political factors rather than his beliefs or expressions, since the *Qadi* considered these to be in an abnormal state of consciousness. Ibn Taymiyyah concurred.

* ¹⁶⁷Yusuf da Costa, 'The Influence of *Tasawwuf* on Islamic practices at the Cape' in Yusuf da Costa and Achmat Davids, eds. *Pages from Muslim History* (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter, 1994), 129-141. Citing Tuan Guru's work *Ma'arifah al-Islam wa al-Iman* which includes some ten pages on the therapeutic uses of Qur'anic verses, a purely mystical practice, Achmat Davids nevertheless claims that 'this does not make Tuan Guru a member of any *tariqah* or *Sufi* mystical order'. Achmat Davids, *Pages from Muslim History*, 54. He fails to distinguish between later developments when the spiritual dimensions of Islam were suppressed and marginalised, affirming Gilsenan's analysis. The early Muslims had a more dynamic vivacious, understanding of Islam and hence had a *tariqah*-centric expression of Islam.

¹⁶⁸ Martin, *Islamic Studies*, 239.

¹⁶⁹ Gilsenan, *Saint and Sufi*, 10.

challenge of experience to orthodoxy'.¹⁷⁰

With the advent of colonisation, and the formation of Arabian kingdoms, the Islamic empire became fragmented and politicians ruled on matters 'religious' since they employed teams of court '*ulama* to grant legitimacy to their rule. With loss of royal patronage, the *Sufi* expressions were stifled. In many countries they were outlawed, their rituals proscribed and they were harassed.¹⁷¹ In Turkey the Whirling dervish ritual was banned in 1925 and in Saudi Arabia the official puritanical *Wahabi* school actively persecuted the saints, burnt their literature and destroyed the sites of veneration of those sanctified, including important relics of the Prophet (S.A.W.)

Tasawwuf has played a major role in moulding and shaping the lives of ordinary people in South Africa, and has contributed immeasurably to devotionals, and has fostered brotherhood. The *Khalifas* have stood out in the forefront as selfless dedicated 'servants' of the people in all spheres of life, as sources of inspiration and emulation, and above all, as teachers of the faith, without altruistic motives.

The *Rawatibs* are utilised therapeutically, in exorcism rites conducted in Iran and North Africa as the *Zar* and *Hamadsha* possession rites. The implication of this observation is that all cultures have a complex of indigenous rituals for maintaining the psycho-stability of the community. In this respect, it is also part of a 'technique' for the resolution of stress.

¹⁷⁰ Geoffrey Parrinder, *Mysticism in the World's Religions* (London: Sheldon Press, 1976), 131.

¹⁷¹ The rulers were quite aware of the danger posed by the 'experientialists' who were empowered by the gifts of piety, and could engender a revolution. The Shah in Iran, Kemal Attaturk in Turkey and Sa'dat in Egypt, and the Saudis in Arabia have legislated against or forbidden mystical praxes.

Shamanism is important not only for the place it holds in the history of mysticism. The shamans have played an essential role in the defence of the psychic integrity of the community. They are pre-eminently the antidemonic champions; they combat not only demons and disease, but also black magicians.

Mircea Eliade¹

Transpersonal anthropology deals with the 'cross-cultural study of transpersonal experiences'.² Trance is the prosaic term for a relationship between humans and spirits which enter and control the former's behaviour, but in contemporary terms may be described as an altered state of consciousness. It was a prerequisite for aspiring priests in many cultures stretching from the American to African and Asian to Siberian traditions as Eliade had made famous in a classic work.³ It was furthered by Bourguignon and made popular by her pupil Felicitas Goodman. In the postmodern era the discipline of transcultural psychiatry arose to explain trance and possession states as part of psychiatry of which Ari Kiev was a founding exponent, in which he proposed that social and cultural phenomena influence mental disorders which have a significant effect on the social system.⁴ A decade later, Laughlin et al., narrowed the focus to the problems in defining consciousness because the term is 'largely experiential, belonging to a long list of terms such as pain, sensation, joy, mind, etc which denote aspects of direct experience without reference either to the neurocognitive structures or to objects

¹ Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (New York: Arkana Penguin, [1964] 1989), 508.

² Laughlin et al., *Brain Symbol*, 18. They cite Campbell and Staniford who define the term as 'the investigation of the relationship between consciousness and culture, altered states of mind research, and the inquiry into the integration of mind, culture and personality'.

³ Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism*.

⁴ Ari Kiev, *Transcultural Psychiatry* (New York: Free Press, Macmillan. 1972).

outside the being'.⁵ Another difficulty is that the term refers to a 'functional complex and not to a discrete thing or quality'. It is noteworthy that consciousness is not specific to biological entities, but exists in the physical atomic world as well.⁶ There are two modes of describing consciousness, either metaphorically, as appears in eastern psychologies, or analytically, as followed by the west, in which the literature on 'consciousness is regrettably crude'. The problem for the west is partially resolved by utilising eastern terminology, and Gary Zukov asserts that the 'languages of eastern mystics and western physicists are becoming very similar'.⁷ To us consciousness is synonymous with life, and it is only *Homo sapiens* who is endowed with the ability to voluntarily alter his state of consciousness through ritual. There is a nexus between trance rituals as healing instruments, possession states and psychoses which is perhaps nowhere better manifest than in the Islamic tradition. The *Zar* ritual performed in Morocco is actually a *ratib*, composed of a *hadara*, has elements of a dance, such as performed by the Khoisan, communal feasting and exorcism, which led Dols to remark that the *Hamadsha* order utilises a syncretic form of therapy composed of African ritual and elements of *sufism*.⁸

Our study asserts that whilst trance is an altered state of consciousness, it is a normal physiological response to diverse stimuli, whilst possession is considered by

⁵ Kiev, *Transcultural*, 77-85.

⁶Evan. H. Walker, 'The Nature of Consciousness.' *Mathematical Biosciences* 7, (1970), 175-176. He speculated from his findings on the interference patterns created by light passing through two slits, that the photon was conscious and intelligent, and that consciousness was associated with all quantum physical processes. Cited by Gary Zukov, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters: An Overview of the New Physics* (London: Fontana, [1979] 1982), 88.

⁷Laughlin et al., *Brain Symbol*, 81, classify consciousness using words such as *sanna* for perception, *cetana* for will, *ekagatta* for concentration, *jivitrindiya* for psychic energy. According to *abidharma* there are 89 distinct types of consciousness. (1990), 81. Gary Zukov, *Dancing Wu Li*, 54.

⁸M. J. Dols, *Majnun*, 292. Zubeida Seedat has studied the Zanzabari Muslims at Kings Rest rescued from a shipwreck in 1873 who perform the Ratib with many African gestures, quite distinct from the Indian and Cape expressions. Z. Seedat, *The Zanzabaris: A Socio-Anthropological Study*. M.A. Thesis. University Natal. (1973). G.C. Oosthuizen, *The Muslim Zanzabaris in South Africa. Research Paper. University Durban-Westville*, (1982). Desai has compared their Ratib with that of the Cape and Natal Indians. (1993).

Laughlin as being due to a 'blocked transference' of information resulting in a discontinuity of experience, which 'may also be due to ritual'. We elucidate that it is due to pathological neurobiology.⁹ From our study based on the multi discipline of psychoneuroimmunology we demonstrate that trance is due to the presence of endogenous opioids which alter the state of consciousness and when the opioid is metabolised, the 'phase shifts', resulting in detumescence or flaccidity known by differing names according to the tradition. Possession however is an abnormal psychological state resulting from 'persisting stress which sets in motion chemical or neurohormonal changes in the individual's highest integrative centres, to cause psychosomatic effects' similar to that producing peptic ulcers.¹⁰ It could also be due to prolonged effect of the endogenous opioid secretions, which are either being over produced (resulting from a conditioning or 'entrainment' process) or a defect in metabolism or excretion which results in a protracted altered state, again attributed to varying agencies such as *jinn* in the Muslim tradition, the goddess in the Hindu, the female *Ayesha kandisha* in the *Zar* amongst the Moroccans, which Laughlin et al term as 'cultural fictions'.¹¹ The dominant feature of possession is altered speech commonly referred to as 'speaking in tongues' or more properly glossolalia. Fritz Staal's view on glossolalia that it 'is a related form of regression, attributed to ancestors or primeval sages (such as Vedic *rsis*) and regarded as eternal or as having originated in a golden age (*krtayuga* or *satyayuga*) is Jungian and no longer tenable'.¹² Tambiah relates that in Sri Lanka, where demons are similarly primeval, mantras are referred to as the 'language of the demons *Yaksa basav*' because it is incomprehensible.¹³

Despite her earlier work on 'demons' Goodman cites research on glossolalia by

⁹Laughlin et al., *Brain Symbol*, 156.

¹⁰Ari Kiev, *Transcultural*, 6.

¹¹We prefer the term 'attribution' as reflecting a more accurate version, since the patient's beliefs or 'myths are true for a believer' whilst fiction is an etic term.

¹²Harvey Alper, *Mantra* (Delhi: Promila, 1989), 81. We shall discuss the displacement of Freudian 'archetypes' as causing mental illness below.

¹³S. J. Tambiah, 'The Magical Power of Words'. in *Man* 3, (1968), 177.

analysis of the sound, amongst Spanish, English and Maya Indian subjects and concluded that the language (glossolalia) is universal to all cultures, and that certain phonemes are common to all. The alteration in voice (a female speaking in a gruff voice and vice versa) is due to lack of control of the laryngeal muscles, which are in delicate balance, responsible for tone and timbre. It is the biochemical effect of constriction of the laryngeal muscles which results in a high note, as seen in males speaking in feminine tones, and vice versa.¹⁴

Glossolalia was considered to be 'dissociation' of cerebral and autonomic nervous function', according to Deikman, and not regression to an earlier or archaic age, which is a Jungian concept.¹⁵ Laughlin et al replaced these views by a cybernetic theory of aberrations in information processing, which is currently reduced to biochemical factors.¹⁶ Glossolalia is thus not the speech of an ingressed alien force, but a physiological response. We attribute this to the spastic effect of the opioids on the laryngeal muscles producing an abnormal voice.

Jinn possession amongst Muslims

From the earliest times of Muslim presence at the Cape, the imams functioned as healers, exorcists, and spiritual guides besides being able to perform the 'miraculous' feat of the Ratib. This led to conversions amongst the slaves 'hovering between Christ and Islam'.¹⁷ This caused them to suffer alienation from the whites. Shahsaheb gave a vivid account of an exorcism to Dr Yusuf da Costa and myself, when invited for dinner

¹⁴Felicitas Goodman, *How about Demons: Possession and Exorcism in the Modern World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 7-9.

¹⁵Louis Jolyon West, 'A Clinical and Theoretical Overview of Hallucinatory Phenomena.' in R. K. Siegel and L. J. West, eds. *Hallucinations* (New York: Wiley, 1979), 305. The theory of dissociation originated with Charcot in 1882, that 'the consciousness breaks up in diverse elements'. Deikman's theory has also not enjoyed much favour. West considers the dissociation in terms of cybernetics, defective information processing which does not produce an image in the cognitive matrix sufficient enough to be cognised as an 'engram'. The current emphasis is on a chemical basis for mental dysfunctions. Laughlin et al., *Brain Symbol*.

¹⁶Laughlin et al., *Brain Symbol*. We base our conclusions on a neurobiological basis.

¹⁷R. C-H Shell, 'Rites and Rebellion: Islamic Conversion at the Cape, 1808-1915'. *Studies in the History of Cape Town* 5, (1984), 1-46.

after Friday prayers on the 6th December 1996 at his home. Shahsaheb obtained his title of *Sahib* which is an honoric title used in the Indo-Pakistan continent and *Shah* stands for a royal status, that of Emperor in the spiritual realm after he had exorcised a *jinn*. Arkoun suggests that the word means a 'power broker'.¹⁸

One of his *murids* had as a neighbour a fellow shopkeeper, who appeared to be under great stress concerning his mother. She suffered excruciating leg pains, and despite numerous doctors, X-rays and medication, including traditional healers, could obtain no relief. The muscles of the right leg were all atrophied, and one could feel the bone right through her skin. An appointment was made after night prayers at 10pm on the 9th January, 1975. Shahsaheb was carrying a plate wrapped in brown paper, upon which he had written various invocations in saffron water. He was seated in the dining room and could see directly opposite into a bedroom, to find the old lady staring back at him with wide baleful eyes.

He asked for two tumblers, one empty and the other filled with water. He dissolved the invocations written on the plate, and emptied the yellowed water into the empty glass. He continued doing this till all the water had been transferred into the other glass which was now a deep yellow colour. She had to drink this water, whilst he was reciting a prayer. Shahsaheb asked the lady: 'Ma is your head getting heavy?' She retorted: 'Don't call me Ma, it is none of your business!' In the right side of the mouth she had to clench an amulet inscribed on folded paper, (*ta'widh*) between her cheek and teeth. She was now shivering and appeared agitated. Then in a gruff male voice she said: 'I am a man, and don't call me Ma! I am warning you, don't come near. You have disturbed me.' It was the 'spirit' speaking. When Shahsaheb asked him to identify himself, he said that he was a Bengali, and that ten months had passed. He needed just two more to 'finish' the lady. 'If you interfere I will finish her', said the spirit.

Shahsaheb replied that he had come to plead for her and asked what wrong she had done to deserve such suffering. 'There is no fight between me and her, but between her and her stepdaughter, and I have been paid to do this on contract for her step-

¹⁸Mohammad Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 70. Fn 3. The term '*khalif*' applies to a vicar, the *imam* denotes a prayer leader or guide, whilst an *Imam* is a spiritual heir to the Prophet. A '*sultan*' is a holder of power without the procedure and conditions applicable to a caliph or imam. Shahsaheb was later awarded this title.

daughter who was in Dongri, India. This was spoken in Urdu, which Shahsaheb said the lady did not know. Asked how the spirit had entered into her, he said that he was sent in a letter from India. When she opened the letter, she was affected, and he wanted her soul, whilst Shahsaheb could keep her body. He asked for the telephone directory, as he realised that he needed assistance in exorcising this spirit. His companion was the late Imam Ahmed Karjekar, and he wanted to phone him, so Shahsaheb called for the telephone directory. At this the spirit laughed (as he could not get help) and said that it being a Saturday, Shahsaheb's help was at a *dhikr* ceremony, and thus unable to assist him. He also remarked that previously other exorcists Ahmed Adam had tried to get rid of him. He (she) made a rude gesture. Shahsaheb asked whether he was prepared to give up and leave the woman. 'Definitely not', was the reply. Shahsaheb wrote some *azimats*, (talimans) and burned them under the nose of the patient. She became violent, thrashed her limbs wildly and started 'performing', flailing about, so that it became difficult to hold her down under the brazier of smoking talismans.

The spirit was prompted to reveal his name, and said his master was Qarun Patil, and that he was paid to trouble the patient and her family.¹⁹ He waved his *shahadat* finger, the right index finger in circles, and said that the spiritual guide *murshid* could not be present there, 'so how could he save you?' Because Shahsaheb is also a shaikh of the *Qadiri* Order, he called upon Abdul Qadir Jilani. He said that his favourite verse, granted to him during his *bayat* (initiation) concerning this saint was: '*Bagdad me bhejdo ke chadar charahadun phulon ki*' (Send me to Bagdad so that I can place a shroud of flowers to cover the grave of the Saint). He took the oath of the saint of Bagdad, at which the spirit offered to leave, and gave him the title of *Badshah* Ruler of Cape Town. Because he had been successful in exposing him, the spirit offered to leave the woman, and said he fully deserved the title of *Shah*.

It was 3am and the spirit then wanted to see the woman alone before leaving, a request denied. It appeared as if a strong gust of wind had suddenly come into the room, and left from the window. The old lady woke up, and as she was sogging wet, from sweating and the splashing of the saffron water, she was told to have a warm shower.

¹⁹Ari Kiev describes an analogous phenomenon in most cultures. *Transcultural Psychiatry* (New York: Free Press, 1972), 107.

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¹⁹ Ari Kiev describes an analogous phenomenon in most cultures. *Transcultural Psychiatry* (New York: Free Press, 1972), 107.

The bedclothes had to be changed also. She lived for 15 years after this episode, finally succumbing to a stroke. The spirit revealed that he was paid to take (possess) her sons also and eventually would have killed them too.

Our own case studies of *Jinn* possession are examples of attributions in accordance with traditional knowledge, as each case was found to have somatic or physical causes to account for the symptoms of bizarre behaviour, each displaying examples of the purported habitats of the *jinn*s ranging from the toilet when a *jinn* afflicted a youth, to a bathroom, to gardens and trees and empty houses.²⁰

The Jinn in the Toilet

A youth phoned me from the city after I had delivered a talk on Prophetic Medicine, wherein I had cited the *hadith*: 'For every disease there is a cure' and was convinced that I could 'cure' him of *jinn* possession which was afflicting him for four years, forcing him to abandon university studies, in the belief that an accounting job would keep him distracted. He had undertaken trips to Makkah, partaken of the 'holy water' from the *Zamzam* well, and had been twice to India and Pakistan for exorcism. The strange thing was that whilst overseas, he was completely cured, but the symptoms of someone holding him around the waist recurred when he returned home. His doctors said that it 'was all in his mind', since the symptoms cleared as the day wore on, but on waking in the morning he 'felt them' again. He described how he had gone to a farm for the performance of the customary sacrifice, (*uddhiya*) and had to go outside the house around midnight to the toilet. As soon as he sat on the toilet, he was grabbed around the waist with such a strong grip that he almost fainted. He rushed back to the farmhouse, and was consoled by the farmer that he would obtain the services of an exorcist in the morning. He had a restless night. On returning home, he was seen by his doctor who could find no pathology, and thereafter by several medical practitioners who confirmed that he had a psychosomatic illness, and that marriage would perhaps provide a preoccupation as well as cure. His problem however, was proposing to a girl without telling her of his affliction. After going through his medical history, he was sent for an Xray of the lumbar spine which revealed an extraspinous process between L3 and

²⁰G.M. Karim, 'Possession by Jinns? Some Cases.' *Proceedings of the I.M.A. Annual Convention*, (1993).

L4 which was responsible for his symptoms, and a course of medication brought complete relief. The actual cause was a dent in the mattress, which altered the curvature of his spine, but during the day, as he was in a vertical position, the pressure was relieved and which also accounted for the fact that his symptoms abated when he went overseas.

The *Jinn* in the garden

Some girls were playing in the garden, and when called in at sunset for supper, all returned except for the aunt's daughter, who was said to be acting strangely, going around in circles, with staring eyes and uttering nonsensical words. The mother rushed out and grabbing the child, scolded her for staying out in the garden till late. The grandfather hastily summonsed the imam, who began his exorcism. He said she had been possessed as her name was *Jamila* (beautiful) and secondly she was playing near a tree. The child repeatedly asked for water which the imam said was the spirit drinking. He recited passages from the Qur'an, and as he raised his voice, she started to get fits. At this time the father returned from work and unable to see his daughter in torment, rushed her to our clinic. She presented with four typical signs: mental confusion (babbling), fits, (hypersensitivity), dry mouth (thirst) and dilated pupils (staring) which suggested Belladonna poisoning. A stomach washout confirmed the diagnosis of *solanaceum* berry (love apples) ingestion. She recovered rapidly after treatment.

A family of *jinn* in a mansion

An example of a 'family of *jinn*' occupying a newly built mansion was diagnosed by an exorcist when weird electrical faults appeared, for which the electricians could not find a cause. Lights used to go on in different rooms, and the doorbell used to ring at odd times, even when the owner kept watch behind the door. As soon as a room was entered, the light would switch off, only to switch on in another part of the house. An exorcist asserted that a family of *jinn* was occupying the house and that the owner's wife would die if they occupied the house without proper exorcism. When the exorcist was in the house all the problems ceased, but when he left they resumed. Finally, the house was put up for sale, but no buyers could be found. A potential buyer, asked the author to investigate the phenomenon. It was found that they owner had fitted heavy woollen carpets and installed imported dimmer switches in

every room, without the regulation 'iron clad boxes'. The Transvaal highveld has the highest incidence of lightning in the world due to the preponderance of heavy metal deposits and the altitude. It was static which had caused the transistorised switches to be activated. The erratic occurrences were caused by static 'build-up', which was neutralised by persons entering a room.²¹

Instances have been reported of abuse by the exorcists, often resulting in death: 'In one of the Old Bailey's most bizarre trials, Mona Rai, a Syrian refugee who was a teacher to the *Sunni* Muslim Community, was found guilty of the unlawful killing of 22yr old Farida Patel, a devout woman, whom they, and she believed to be possessed by a *Jinn*'. Rai was not a religious teacher, but held herself out to be an 'expert' on the Qur'an. Experts said that 'although the Qur'an mentions evil spirits it did not instruct beatings to cleanse them'. The patient had returned from India after a stressful and failed marriage in which she was subjected to sexual abuse. 'She behaved strangely, had a distorted face, waved her hands around her head, and talked of *jinn* threatening to cut her tongue if she glorified Allah'. She was beaten for five hours by the exorcist, despite entreaties from her father to stop. Rai then jumped on the patient's stomach, indicating that the *jinn* was there. The patient died shortly after as a result of internal injuries, nine fractured ribs and over a 100 skin contusions. The autopsy report indicated that she 'was effectively poisoned by toxic natural painkillers released into her body'. She displayed all the signs of possession: irrational behaviour, an altered state of consciousness, becoming aggressive when sacred matters are discussed, facial distortion, glossolalia (voices of old people), 'having been in her since the age of four, and of wanting to marry her'. The newspaper mentions that there have been several cases in British courts, of such deaths occurring from use of violence.²²

A case termed the 'Yelling, threshing, Hitting and Wasting Syndrome'

²¹The author was the first 'Indian' to be granted a radio-amateur licence in South Africa as reported in *73 Magazine for Radio Amateurs*, (Farmingdale, NY: Nov 79), 205. The licence was previously restricted to whites. Knowledge of electronics enabled me to 'crack' this case.

²²*Sunday Telegraph*, London: (4th December 1994). Ari Kiev, *Transcultural*, 107. Details many 'pre-scientific' 'treatments' such as beating, burning, scarification, sacred 'recitals', amulets, sacred words written in special ink, etc.

described by W. M. J. Mosboom, is an ideal case that would have been diagnosed as possession if it were not for special biochemical investigations: A fifty six year old man was subject to sudden fits of mania, yelling, hitting and threshing his limbs. After a few hours, he would fall asleep from exhaustion and wake up perfectly normal, but amnesic of the incident. He was investigated on several occasions, and finding no cause, was referred to psychiatrists who sent him back, as his behaviour was entirely rational and did not fit into any psychiatric syndrome. He was once again admitted for an attack, seen by a different doctor. He even spat on the doctor's face. The doctor performed a single test and with a glucagon injection, the patient was fully restored. On subsequent analysis (biopsy) he was found to have a 'benign insulinoma' of the pancreas, which secreted insulin sporadically to cause his blood glucose to fall to very low levels resulting in his bizarre behaviour.²³

Origin of Possession Beliefs

The origin of belief in possession amongst Muslims can be traced to ancient Semitic beliefs.²⁴ It was thought that people, (magicians, priests), could influence the spirits to enter the bodies of one's enemies to cause disease.²⁵ Ancient cures ranged from symbolic acts to propitiate the gods of healing by offering dates, food, goatskins, sacrifice of sheep, fowls, birds, pigeons or rare birds. These primitive beliefs were borrowed by the Israelites, as shewn in the numerous verses of the Old Testament.²⁶ After the Exile, the theory of possession became more developed, but now changed from being influenced by a spirit of a god, to that of a demon. The New Testament has the most numerous examples and analogies with Muslim beliefs of possession and cure

²³W. M. J. Mosboom, 'The Yelling, Threshing, Hitting and Wasting Syndrome' in *CME* 14, no. 10 (1996), 1498. Cited in *The Lancet* 348, (1996), 238.

²⁴M.W. Dols, *Majnun*, 9. 'Exorcism was a major feature of the teaching of Jesus' which was based on the Old and New testaments. Compared to Muhammad, 'this practice played no such role in his life, ...'neither was there a Muslim priesthood empowered to perform religious cures'.

²⁵Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*. (London: Luzac. 1902).

²⁶1 Samuel 16:14, 1 Samuel 28:32.

of them by Jesus.²⁷ (RA)

The concept of unclean and clean *jinn* occurs in Islam too. Epilepsy in the Bible is also attributed to spirits which still persist in the concepts of the Imam of Makkah, Shaikh bin Baaz in recent times. In Mark 9:18 a classic description of epilepsy occurs: foaming, gnashing teeth, and 'pineth away', which is ascribed to spirits. (RA) Jesus removed this spirit and the child was cured. Acts 19:15, James 2:19 also refer to possession. There are many parallels in Muslim beliefs with those found in the New Testament, such as clean and unclean demons, fits and mental illness, as caused by demons. Bin Baaz insists that fits are due to Jinn.²⁸ He declared it heretical to deny *jinn* possession. Most of his comments can be traced to Christian and Talmudic sources, derived from questionable *hadith*.

Pagan Arabia was riddled with polytheism, and belief in *jinn* possession causing illness, was a norm. This was a period of 'ignorance', superstition and animistic belief. Their entire lives were lived in insecurity, tribal animosity, leading to alcoholism. Spirits lived in trees and so trees became taboo, idols became objects of invocation. It is therefore to be expected that these beliefs will still prevail, even though the pagans had become Muslims. No person is born as *tabula rasa*. Muslims still believe that one should not go near trees at *Maghrib* time, or enter derelict houses following *Jahili* beliefs.

Many old customs and beliefs persisted amongst the new Muslims. The Qur'an is a dynamic, socially interactive didactic document, compared to the previous 'static' religious texts. Many statements are repeated, which western scholars found 'tedious'. New reforms were introduced gradually. The best example of this gradualisation is the prohibition of alcohol. The pagan Arabs were connoisseurs of alcohol, and addicted to it. Prohibition was achieved in stages. First it was described as the work of the Devil to be shunned. Caliph 'Umar stopped drinking immediately. Several more emphatic verses were later revealed on prohibition, so that it took from two to ten years before

²⁷Math. 8:28-32, Math 8:7:24-30, Mark 5:2-16, and Mark 7:24-30.

²⁸Ibn Taymiyya, *Essay on the Jinn* Trans. Aminah Bilal Philips (Cape Town: Esquire Press, 1989), 120.

the Makkans completely forsook drinking.²⁹

A similar phenomenon occurs concerning belief in the Jinn. The Qur'an marginalised the role of the *Jinn* in the affairs of man after the *Hijrah*, and consigned them to a ethereal dimension. Dols cites Alfred Welch that after the *hijrah*, the term *jinn* drops out after the early Medinian period.³⁰ *Jinn* still existed, but 'possession' as occurs in the Old and New Testaments was no longer mentioned. The Qur'an also provided the early Muslims with protective devices amongst the Qur'anic revelations against the mischief of spirits, if indeed one believed in them. The *al-muw'azathani*, the 'salvific duo' amongst *Surahs* could counter other forces of evil as well as *jinn*. Allah was the sole and best protector. Possession is not specifically mentioned in the Qur'an, nor is there consensus amongst the contemporary scholars that *jinn* possess humans and create mischief. Fazlur Rahman is categoric that, following Galen, medieval Muslim doctors discounted belief in possession. Both the credal tradition and the Islamic medical tradition rejected possession.³¹ Islamic cosmology however has a definite role for *Jinn* as a creation, which is certainly not that of creating mischief for mankind.

Etymology of *Jinn*

We have to distinguish between the *jinn* of folklore, the fiction of the Arabian Nights and the *jinn* of the Qur'an. The root *masdar* of *jinn* is '*janna*', he concealed, or covered with darkness, eg. in 6:76, when the night covered him (the Prophet Ibrahim (RA)) with darkness (*janna alaihi*). The classical philologists define *al-jinn* as 'intense or confusing darkness' or that 'which is concealed from men's senses' i.e. things, beings, or forces which cannot be perceived by man, i.e. they do not have corporeality but do 'have an objective reality, whether concrete or abstract.'³² Muhammad Ali states that *Jinn* means 'people living in darkness or disbelief' and some are human. In *Surah Bani Isra'il* v 88 where men and jinn are challenged to combine to produce a likeness of the

²⁹Malik B. Badri, *Islam and Alcoholism* (New York: American Trust Publications, 1979).

³⁰Dols, *Majnun*, 214.

³¹Fazlur Rahman, *Health and Medicine in the Islamic Tradition* (Kuala Lumpur: Mujeeb, 1993), 84-85.

³²Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an* Appendix 3: The Concept of Jinn. (London: Brill, 1980), 994-5.

Qur'an, the Jinn refer to leaders of evil who are human rather than ethereal.³³ Martin Lings is emphatic that some of the satans (creators of mischief) were the Jews of Medina.³⁴

Belief in the existence of *Jinn* is part of Islamic cosmology. The argument in this chapter concerns the fact of 'possession' of humans by *jinn*. Maulana Fazlur Rahman Ansari is quite emphatic that *Jinn* are a creation who do not interfere in the affairs of men, and live in another space-time dimension.³⁵ Ibn Sina is quite specific that *jinn* have no reality in the affairs of men.³⁶ Maulana Masududin Ahmed of Karachi, being a medical doctor as well, is quite categorical, that 'the stories of *jinn* getting into people is a blatant white lie'³⁷ Ismai'l al-Faruqi in a personal communication said that two Qur'anic principles which render *jinn* possession to be against the Islamic ethos, are that of 'divine dependancy', where all creation is totally dependant on Allah, and created for a purpose, and certainly causing harm and mischief and evil is not one of them, and secondly, the divine initiative is claimed as a principle of nature, never as

³³Muhammad Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*. English Translation. (Lahore: Ashraf, 1951), 562. fn 1466. In the four places in which the disbelievers are challenged to produce the like of the Qur'an, the only place where *jinn* are included is the above verse. The other three places, leaders or *shuhuda* are mentioned. Hence he concludes that the *jinn* referred to are human, not ethereal beings in this verse. His comments on *Suratul Jinn* is supported by Muhammad Asad who states that the *Jinn* in this *Surah* refer to people of the Mosaic dispensation. Muhammad Ali states that they were Christians, because 72:3 states that they shall not set up partners, nor ascribe 'a consort nor a son' to Allah. The confusion as to *Jinn* being believers (Christians or Jews) arose from an interpretation of these verses as referring to ethereal *jinn* instead of humans. Verse 6 states that certain men, whom the translator states were men of weak intellect, followed the 'leaders of evil' (fn 2581, 2581a). In note 822, the *ma'shar* refers not to two classes of beings, but to a single community. Certain *jinn* thus are certainly human, where *Jinn* means 'people living in darkness, disbelief or inspirers of doubt and leaders of evil'.

³⁴Martin Lings *Muhammad*. (Vermont: Inner Traditions, 1975), 126.

³⁵F.R. Ansari, *Qur'anic Foundations and Structure of Muslim Society* (Karachi. FIS, 1985), xvii and 77. Personal Communication.

³⁶Mircea Eliade, s.v. 'Djinn' in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1961).

³⁷M. Ahmed, *Islamic Viewpoint on Taweez and Jinn* (Durban: Pioneer Printers. 1989). Dr. Muhammad 'Irfaan writing in the an-Nadwa newspaper of 14/10/1407 is condemned by Shaikh bin Baaz for stating that 'the idea of a *Jinn* entering a human and speaking through him is 100% wrong'. Bilal Phillips (trans) of Ibn Taymiyya's *Essay on Jinn*, 120.

interference in any particular working thereof, in any single nexus of cause and effect'.³⁸

The views of traditional healers and the scholastics on possession was obtained by consulting three prominent Islamic scholars in South Africa on their opinions in determining prevailing beliefs amongst both the laity and the imams: The editor of the *Majlis*, organ of the *Majlisul 'Ulama of South Africa* of Port Elizabeth, Maulana Desai is regarded as the authoritative voice of the Indian '*Ulama* in South Africa, Mufti M. A. Haswary of Laudium and the late Shaikh Najaar of the Islamic Council of South Africa. The former two are quite adamant that possession is a fact, whilst the latter discounted the idea.³⁹ In answer to a question several years later, whether Jinn have the power to harm and kill, Maulana Desai replied that they have this power just as human beings have.⁴⁰

The late Shaikh Najaar, President of the Islamic Council of South Africa in a differing view supports our contention that *jinn* do not 'descend' to earth - do not possess women or men, and cannot cohabit with humans, or procreate as they are of a differing species. When asked about the nuns conceiving babies due to *jinn* as Ibn Taymiyya asserts, he responded that the *jinn*s were probably monks.⁴¹

Hakim Chisti is quite specific that there are two types of *jinn*, the malevolent ones cause human afflictions like fever, colic and mental illness, whilst the good ones go

³⁸Isma'il Raghi al-Faruqi, '*Taqlid*' *ZYGON: Journal of Religion and Science* 2, 2:3 (Sept. 1967), 235. He quotes Shaykh Bin Baz as maintaining that the earth is fixed, and does not rotate, and any opinion or belief to the contrary is guilt of *kufr* heresy. According to 19:64, 'we (the angels) do not come down to earth except when commanded by your Lord.' in reply to the Prophet's desire for Gabriel to visit more often. Angels and Jinn are mentioned in 6:112, 43:36, 58:19, 19:83.

³⁹Maulana A.S. Desai, *The Majlis* 10, (5 October 1992), 5.

⁴⁰ *The Majlis* 12, no.10 (June 1997), 12 This implies that humans can harm people presumably by witchcraft. In the same issue *Ta'widh* (amulets) are efficacious if written by a pious person, according to the *Hadith*. This is a tacit admission that there are 'many unscrupulous persons' who prey upon the ignorant.

⁴¹His translator, Aminah Bila Phillips, remarks that many nuns buried such offspring outside the monasteries. These *jinn* were called succubi, whilst fallen angels were called incubi. Ibn Taymiyya states that unconscious errors in human behaviour, such as urinating in a wrong place, or on *jinn*, or pouring boiling water on them, so infuriate them that possession sometimes occurs when the *jinn* indulge in horseplay. (1989), 33.

about without harming anyone.⁴²

From studies in Pakistan, Professor S. B. Malik and his outstanding colleagues, A. Bashir, T. M. Choudry and M. Ahmed of Lahore in a study of Schizophrenia state that the semiology of Jinn possession are actually 'delusions of control' due to cultural influences in the subcontinent. All their patients diagnosed as *jinn* possession were eventually admitted to a psychiatric ward for recovery.⁴³ Professor Muharrari of Iran, in a personal communication stated that there were hardly any cases amongst females in Iran, as their classic physicians, such as al-Rhazi, Ibn Sina, Ismail Jurjani, Nasiruddin al-Tusi (who is regarded as the Father of Psychotherapy), and the *Imams* regarded mental illness as a disease, and not possession.⁴⁴ Shaikh Tantawi of al-Azhar is one outstanding scholar in Egypt who also belongs to the school which rejects possession. Shaykh bin Baaz and Ibn Taymiyya, Mufti Aswary as well as Maulana Desai's views that disbelief in possession is tantamount to *Kufr* need to be re-examined in the light of the Qur'an and the contemporary status of knowledge on the causes of mental illness, and the various techniques (rituals) utilised in the treatment to alter consciousness.⁴⁵ Islam has the most refined and sophisticated 'techniques' for the cure of 'possession' as institutionalised in the five pillars.⁴⁶

The early Muslims had ingrained preconceptions and beliefs of *Jinn*. When they went out into the desert at night (for travelling, as it is cooler) and saw methane flames shooting out of the ground for a fleeting moment, only to spring up further on, they attributed these to spirits. When they visited the toilets they were filled with fear. Even after accepting Islam, they still had many beliefs and behaviour-customs of the pagans.

⁴²Hakim M. Chisti, *The Book of Sufi Healing* (Vermont: Inner Traditions, 1991). He also prescribes many invocations and prayers for mental illnesses.

⁴³S. B. Malik et al., 'Schneider's First Rank Symptoms of Schizophrenia. in *British Journal of Psychiatry* 156, (1990), 109-111.

⁴⁴M. Muharrari, 'From Sorcery to Psychotherapy: Historical development in Islam.' *Proceedings*. (of the Int. Congress on the History of Medicine in Islam and Iran. Teheran University). (October 1992.)

⁴⁵Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism*.

⁴⁶ This conclusion is perhaps one of our major findings.

Prayers were then prescribed to them to assure them of protection. This does not imply that possession is a fact. Many of the traditional scholars failed to read or interpret the verses in context, nor in chronological order, nor is a comparative approach made to show where Islamic views on possession is an advance on prevailing superstition.

Usman Najati, Professor of Psychology at Cairo University states that the Qur'an is *the* Book on Psychology because it deals principally with human behaviour, the ethical as desired and the prevailing immoral. Islam transformed and refined an ignorant society steeped in alcoholism, vice and false beliefs into a progressive, literate religious society.

The Qur'an itself proclaims that there are verses for healing: 'We send down in the Qur'an, parts which are for healing as a mercy for *believers* (mumins).' (*Surah Isra'il* 17:82). This is indicative of the tools given to empower man over all creatures. The Qur'an was revealed gradually in response to the needs of the early Muslim society. As Muslim society progressed, the *jinn* were marginalised, and possession was no longer to be feared as playing a role in society. *Jinn* possession was an illness for which cures should be sought, according to the dictum: 'For every disease there is a cure'. The omission of a comparative-historical approach to the Qur'anic text will explain the divergent views and lack of consensus on *jinn* possession amongst Muslim scholars.⁴⁷ However, early Muslim savants viewed mental illness as a disease, for which they had the most sophisticated hospitals in medieval times, far in advance of those in Europe.⁴⁸

Semiology of Jinn Possession

The symptoms of *jinn* possession are diverse and because it is a psycho-somatic syndrome, the symptoms will vary greatly. Ari Kiev lists the symptoms as ranging from

⁴⁷Nasr laments the deformation of the Qur'anic message in modern times. The study of the *sirah* in Muslim lands concentrates on the historical at the expense of the spiritual. This leads to a legalistic historical Islam, devoid of spirituality. S.H. Nasr, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (London: Longman, 1975), 85. He states that it is only *Tasawwuf* which provides the unity between the various interpretations of the *shari'ah*. This point is further stressed in his discussion of the *shari'ah*, in *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1975), 95.

⁴⁸Dols, *Majnun*, 173.

fits, faints, rigid postures, violent dancing, glossolalia to end in unconsciousness.⁴⁹

He emphasises that psychosomatic illnesses such as gastric ulcers are due to an 'entrainment' process.⁵⁰

Goodman defines 'possession' as 'a being of the alternate reality enters into the body of the practitioner and assumes control over it'.⁵¹ She is one of the few anthropologists who has experienced the 'demons' and is convinced that spirit possession occurs.⁵² She can summon up the spirits and converses with them (for divination). She tried various postures and methods, such as the use of rattles, to speed up her entry into 'alternate reality'.⁵³ The posture she found to be ideal to invoke the 'presence of the spirits has an equivalence in the formal Muslim prayer'.⁵⁴ Weston Le Barre has an opposing view. He states that there is no corporeality of demons in human cognition. What is perceived is actually 'projected' by the cognitive matrix which is dependent on intentionality, expectations, interpretation which thus arrives as

⁴⁹Ari Kiev, *Transcultural Psychiatry* (New York: Free Press, 1972), 32.

⁵⁰Gastric ulcers, hypertension and other 'stress related' illnesses are due to biological responses which become 'entrained'. 'Sociological theorists tend to view psychiatric illness as one form of social deviation, thereby placing the stress on social labelling.' Ari Kiev, *Transcultural*, 3.

⁵¹ Felicitas Goodman, *Spirits Ride the Wind*, 42.

⁵²Felicitas Goodman, *How about Demons: Possession and Exorcism in the Modern World*. (Bloomington. Indiana: University Press., 1986), 96.

⁵³Following Charles Laughlin et al., in *Brain, Symbol and Experience: Toward a Neuropsychology of Human Consciousness*. (Boston: Shambala, 1990), 18-10, we prefer the term 'Transpersonal' experience rather than Alternate Reality. 'Transpersonal Psychology is a movement in Science that acknowledges the significance of data beyond the boundaries of ordinary ego-consciousness, ranging from peak experiences, trances, ecstasy, mystical experience, cosmic awareness...'

⁵⁴Felicitas Goodman, 'Body Posture and Religious Altered States of Consciousness: An experimental Investigation.' in *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 26, (1986), 81-118. In a later book *Where the Spirits ride the Wind* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 72ff. she describes various postures for entering 'alternate reality' in order to meet the spirits. We find that her ideal posture to be strikingly similar to that of the *jalsa* or *qa'ida* position of the formal prayers, the *salat*. In addition there are 'sacred times' as well as a geo-magnetic orientation, (*qibla*) in Islamic ritual, which Eliade terms the *axis mundi*. Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return or Cosmos and History* trans. W. R. Trask, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971), 12-17.

experience.⁵⁵ In severe cases, or when protracted, an inability to resolve stress manifests as possession states which are more prolonged than Altered States of Consciousness. Trance states are no longer enigmas or esoterica in anthropology when reduced to neurobiology.

Our study elicits that mystic rituals such as the *Ratib al Rifa'iyya*, the Whirling Dervishes⁵⁶, *Zurkhaneh* in Iran, the *Zar* in Yemen and North Africa,⁵⁷ the *hadra*, and in certain cases of the *Ta'ziyyah* fire-walking,⁵⁸ are a complex of rituals having similar objectives as in other cultures and following the biogenetic structuralist school are rituals or methods of resolving stress syndromes. The *Zar* affliction, usually amongst females, is a plea for 'power' and is 'the only way they can obtain influence over others', since most of the patients and healers in the *zar* are female.⁵⁹

The *adhkar*, the drums, rhythmic activity of swaying dancing movements, are triggers for the immune system to produce monocytes for release of beta-endorphins. This study substantiates Bushell's research amongst Ethiopian Christians establishing that prostrations, meditations, chants and fasting cause an increase in circulating endorphins. The hermits could stay without food for months on end, and their skin became light, as seen amongst the Bushmen. It was a phenomenon akin to hibernation

⁵⁵ Weston La Barre, 'Anthropological Perspectives on Hallucination and Hallucinogens'. in *Hallucinations: Behaviour, Experience and Theory*. eds. Siegel, R. K. & L. J. West, (New York: John Wiley, 1975), 40. See also L.J. West, 'A Clinical and Theoretical Overview of Hallucinations' in the same volume. (1975), 299.

⁵⁶ Ira Friedlander, *The Whirling Dervishes* (New York: Macmillan. 1975)

⁵⁷ Vincent Crapanzano & Vivien Garrison, *Case Studies in Spirit Possession* (New York: John Wiley, 1977), 185.

⁵⁸ Peter J. Chelkowski, ed. *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran* (New York: Soroush Press, 1979).

⁵⁹ Ari Kiev, *Transcultural*, 39. He observes that the *Zar* is a 'native system of psychotherapy', which propitiates 'evil spirits', which the patient believes to be the case, and expects 'magic' to cure him. He cites Thomas Merton as saying 'that there are differences between the levels reached in regressive trance states, and those attained in religious mystical experiences. We suggest that this is due to a physiological production of endogenous opioids in mystical states, whilst opioids produced under stress are pathological.

in animals.⁶⁰ The endorphins alter the state of consciousness, as seen in mystic states (*hal*). The exact response is influenced by intentionality (*niyyah*), and this is culturally conditioned, as Ari Kiev maintains and as we have demonstrated in our cross cultural study.⁶¹

Rituals as agents of social change

Islamic rituals are both morphostatic (processes ensuring social system stability) and morphogenic, (processes which challenge, revitalise prevailing beliefs), the former are those belonging to the *Shariah*, whilst the latter are those of the *Tariqah*.⁶² It is only when these are combined, i.e. *shari'ah* or legal necessities (*fara'id*) plus emotional responses *tariqah*, the spiritual path which ensure the most sophisticated institutionalised rituals for producing opioids.⁶³ And if performed passionately with an intentionality, that an altered state of consciousness is induced.⁶⁴

Only then does a ritual result in tranquillity, and physical well-being (lowered blood pressure) and enhanced creativity, according to the Qur'anic verse: Does the

⁶⁰William Bushell, 'Psycho physiological and Comparative Analysis of Ascetico-Meditational Discipline: Toward a new theory of Asceticism.' in *Asceticism* eds. Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995a), 554-575.

⁶¹ Ari Kiev, *Transcultural*, 6.

⁶²D'Aquili et al., *Spectrum*, 253. *Tariqah* refers to the mystical dimension of Islam, whilst *Shari'ah* the formalised legalistic. The needless tension between the scholars and the saints could be resolved if a wider perspective towards Islam is utilised, showing that the two are integral to 'proper Islam' and according to Imam Malik's aphorism, both aspects are necessary. A legalistic Islam reduces Islamic ritual to a barren skeleton, unable to achieve spiritual progress.

⁶³The term *fara'id* is commonly translated as 'obligatory' which introduces a legalistic element to an imperative. The word 'necessity' is more appropriate, as a precondition needed for a spiritual journey. It is best exemplified by the preconditions, removal of shoes, *wudu*, in the postures of the *salat*, which the Prophet said was the *me'raj* of the *mu'min*, a journey of ascent to a transcendent dimension. (EAW.)

⁶⁴The two forms of ritual are delineated by Tom Burns and Charles Laughlin, in *Spectrum*, 249-277. Imam Malik's aphorism on the need for combining *Shari'ah* and *Tariqah* to obtain a complete submission is most apposite: 'He who learns jurisprudence and neglects Sufism becomes a reprobate; he who learns Sufism and neglects jurisprudence becomes an apostate, and he who combines both attains the realisation of Truth'. S. H. Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (Allen & Unwin, 1975), 125.

dhikr remembrance of Allah not bring tranquillity to the *qulub*? (pl. Hearts)⁶⁵ This confirms the findings of al-Kadi who described physiological changes during Qur'anic recitation.⁶⁶ Our work is an advance in that we have elicited and provided substantiation for the mechanism of these changes. We postulate that the rituals have an influence on the immune system, notably the *dhikr*, which produce endorphins resulting in tranquillity as well as altering the state of consciousness.⁶⁷ The state is referred to as *hal*.⁶⁸

Possession is a defensive mechanism and is actually a cry for help, an intense stress reaction. Our thesis on the Islamic ritual substantiates Seyyed Hossein Nasr's remark that Islamic prayer has been considered by certain Muslim sages as a refuge *malja'* in the storm of daily life.⁶⁹ This reduces the stresses of daily living.

Psychoses and mystical experience

There is a nexus between psychoses of which Schizophrenia is a major component, and mystical practices which alter states of consciousness and result in 'deviant' behaviour, are influenced by religious rituals in all traditions. Wapnick's remarks deserve citation since it acknowledges the separation of inner experience with outer expressive behaviour: 'What is needed in the *integration* of these inner experiences with the various social roles one adopts, the mystic provides the example of the method whereby the inner and outer may be joined; the schizophrenic, the tragic result when they are separated'.⁷⁰ S.H. Nasr said that the present methods of

⁶⁵13:28.

⁶⁶Ahmed al-Kadi, 'Biological Effects of the Qur'an on Physiological Functions' *Jimasa*. Islamic Medical Association. Durban. (1989). Paper delivered at the Proceedings Third Conference on Islamic Medicine held at Istanbul, September 1984.

⁶⁷G.M. Karim, 'The Influence of the Islamic Rituals on the Immune System' International Conference on Islamic Medicine and the Millenium of al-Rhazi. University of Teheran, October 1992.

⁶⁸Kenneth Wapnick, 'Mysticism and Schizophrenia.' Richard Woods, ed. in *Understanding Mysticism* (London: Athlone Press, 1980), 335-336.

⁶⁹S.H. Nasr, *Living Sufism* (London: Mandala, [1972] 1980).

⁷⁰ S.H. Nasr, *Living Sufism*, 337.

psychoanalysis are but parodies of the initiatic methods of the Sufis.⁷¹ Possession also has a relationship with social power according to Bourguignon who states that possession trances represent potentially important and dramatic instruments of social power, and thus of social change.

* Kluckhohn, an anthropologist regards ritual as a cultural product that provides (along with myths) systematic 'protection against supernatural dangers: the threat of ill-health, threats of the physical environment, antisocial trends and tensions and the pressure of a more powerful society.'⁷² In 1988, the apartheid government in South Africa, alarmed at the high incidence of suicide and family slayings amongst whites, noticed that Muslims, regarded as 'black' were subjected to all types of restrictive legislation, menial jobs, lesser salaried than whites and were educationally less endowed with constraints being placed on their university entrance. Due to residential and commercial segregation they had to travel further distances. The Muslims however showed the least incidence of suicide. There was no record of family slaying, despite the fact that the Muslims were under greater insecurity and immense stress. A Conference was convened in 1989 to elicit Muslim 'techniques' for the resolution of stress, in which we demonstrated that Muslims were unknowingly utilising six 'secret' tools for coping with stress.⁷³ By practising rituals such as the *salat*, the *dhikr*, the *milad*, recitation of the Qur'an, actively or by passive listening, the recital of the *tasbih* of Bibi Fatima, and the 'Most Beautiful Names', and by following the *Sunnah* they were utilising the most ritually efficacious, providentially given, structured tools for coping with stress. The familiar ritual of greeting, the *Asalamu alaikum* is a benediction

⁷¹S.H. Nasr, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (London: Longman, 1975), 141. An admirable critique of Freudian and Jungian methods of 'cure' in western psychiatry. He claims that Muslims do not need psychoanalysis. What they need are the religious rites, such as the *salat*, invocations, which open the soul to the influx of Divine grace which are a most powerful means of curing the soul's ailments and untying its knots'. We have found biochemical evidence for this in our thesis.

⁷²Cited in D'Aquili et al., *Spectrum*, 251.

⁷³G.M. Karim, 'Coping with Stress in Islam.' Conference on the Role of Religion in Stress Resolution. South African National Council for Mental Health. Johannesburg. 1989.

rather than a colloquial 'hi'. In Islam every act is sacralised, even going to work to support one's family is regarded as an act of worship. The Islamic social structure based on the *Sunnah* which endorses 'extended families' rather than 'nuclear' is a strong deterrent to personality breakdown. Because of deficiencies in Islamic education in western countries there is a degradation of Islamic ritual leading to deformation of the society. The production of 'nominal' Muslims faced with foreign acculturation and an inability to cope with stress results in disruption of the personality.⁷⁴ Some of the exorcists exploit the ill and ignorant, as we witness in the mistreatment by 'Muslim' religious 'teachers' of women, beating them severely to get rid of *Jinn*, often enough to cause death. Some are even disrobed, and fondled by elderly 'shaikhs' as shown in a BBC TV report, swearing on the Holy Qur'an that the patient was not touched, and even denying any such action after being shown a videotape by a hidden camera.⁷⁵

The analogue of *Amafufuyana* Syndrome in Africans

The most important syndrome of spirit possession in the Bantu is the *amafufuyana* syndrome.⁷⁶ School girls went berserk en masse. On three occasions they rushed out in the middle of classes, without warning, and attacked a supposed witch. They were stopped by the police from killing a second. They overturned the police vehicle. The police could not control them with conventional methods, and called in traditional healers. The traditional healers ascribed all the symptoms to spirit possession. Felicity Edwards concluded that the syndrome is a stress related phenomenon associated with socio-cultural tradition; social disorder with cultural transition is devastating to the personality; 'that as a result of a higher degree of mobility, industrial development and so on, competition from foreign invaders,...fellow

⁷⁴G.M. Karim, 'Coping with Stress in Islam'. Proceedings of the International Congress on the History of Medicine in Islam and Iran. Teheran University. 1992. This paper which was voted to be the day's best at the Conference, details the six 'secret tools' Muslims employ through their rituals which relieves stress and empowers them to endure inordinate suffering.

⁷⁵A. Kays, *Jinn, Jadoo and Jinx* (Roshnee: al 'Ilmu Nur, 1997). Details many such cases of abuse, beatings and financial exploitation.

⁷⁶Felicity Edwards, 'Amafufuyana Spirit Possession: A Report on some Recent Developments.' *Religion in Southern Africa*. Vol. 5, no. 2: 3-17. July 1984.

Zaehner's similar efforts on mysticism, yield no progress in our understanding of the illness. In her descriptions of treatment by the exorcist, Christian elements are introduced, which is analogous to the syncretic elements of *zar* and the phenomenology accords largely with that described in Shahsaheb's exorcism. The gyrations have an equivalence to that of the whirling dervishes, or the *hadrah*, which are 'techniques' for opioid release which calms the patient and leads to recovery. The term reactive psychoses is used to describe this condition which is a pathological attribution, whilst trance states are physiological. In fact the term 'brief' in 'reactive psychosis' would imply that it is a physiological process which ends, whereas possession is prolonged and needs intensive therapy, as Dols described of the One Thousand Nights. The finding that opioids are implicated, makes the condition to be verifiable by urine analysis, and the treatment proposed is a major advance of this thesis, i.e. an opioid antagonist could cause recovery in less than an hour.

The above factors are of salience in the incidence of *jinn* possession amongst Muslims, more especially amongst females. From this we can conclude that ritual through religious traditions is a power resource for the human personality and acts as a stabiliser of it.⁸¹ Its reflex would be that a lack of religious tradition as well as a lack of ritual leads to a breakdown of the personality. Ritual decreases stress and leads to social cohesion.⁸²

Deikman calls the abnormal syndrome as being due to the deautomisation process. Eight centuries ago, al-Muhasibi (781-857 AH) had already postulated three centres in the mind, which had to be in balance for psychological equilibration.⁸³ Based on his work, we have delineated the centres which are influenced by the various

⁸¹Tom Burns & Charles Laughlin. 'Ritual and Social Power' in D'Aquili et al., *Spectrum*, 249-279.

⁸²Charles Laughlin & Eugene G D'Aquili, 'Ritual and Stress' in *Spectrum*, 280-291.

⁸³Margaret Smith, *Al-Muhasibi: An Early Mystic of Bagdad*. (Karachi: Reprint, 1980), 86-110. A more detailed exposition is given in my paper delivered at the Second International Conference on the Qur'an. New Delhi. 1982. 'Psychiatry in the Qur'an'. We elucidate the action of Islamic rituals on different centres of the *ruh-qalb-nafs* axis to ensure psycho stability, disruption of which leads to psychosis or neurosis. Current views are that these are due to chemical imbalances.

adhkar.⁸⁴

Weston La Barre states that the idea of possession is derived directly from a 'somewhat literal reading of the New Testament texts', implying that one cannot use the biblical text as proof of possession.⁸⁵ Muslims then cannot rely at all on antecedent texts to justify belief in possession, when the Last Testament (the Qur'an) displaced the previous Scriptures. It is therefore against the Qur'anic ethos to believe in *jinn* causing disease by possession.

The Qur'anic verses explicit in negating possession are 17:65 'Satan will have no power (*sultan*) over my servants'..., confirmed further in 14:22 'I had no authority(*sultan*) over you, except that I called you (to unbelief and disobedience) and you responded. So blame me not, but blame yourself..' In 15:42.' You shall have no authority over my slaves ('ibadi) except those who follow you...68:52 'when they hear the Qur'an, they say he is surely *majnoon* (mad) but he is not.'

The anthropologists D'Aquili et al., deserve citation on the reason for false beliefs: 'belief in high gods mirrors the existence of great differences in rank among living people; belief in malevolent witches mirrors the existence of interpersonal conflicts in an unorganised social group'.⁸⁶ This is very apt for the South African social context. Goodman predicts that social mobilisation and affluence, accompanied by a loss of traditional values will lead to an increase in irrational beliefs.⁸⁷ This would account for the high incidence of '*Jinn* disease' amongst immigrants of Indo-Pak origin to the U.K. and South Africa. Criminal Trials in Europe have also been held against exorcists. Goodman describes one case where both parents and priest were charged for causing the death of 12 year old Annette Hassler. She was beaten to death in a small Swiss village.

⁸⁴G. M. Karim, "Psychiatry in the Qur'an". Proc. Second World Conference on the Qur'an. Hamdard University. Tughlaqabad. Delhi. India. 1982.

⁸⁵Weston Le Barre, *They shall take up Serpents: The psychology of the Southern snake-handling cult* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis University Press, 1962) cited in Bourguignon, *Religion, Altered States of Consciousness, and Social Change*, 364.

⁸⁶Tom Burns & Laughlin. 'Ritual and Social Power' in *Spectrum*, 266.

⁸⁷Felicitas Goodman, *Demons*, xiii.

If beliefs about *Jinn* causing epilepsy are valid, then a report of Professor Ali Moosa whilst at the University of Natal Medical School provides informed refutation. Epilepsy is rampant in African children in Kwa Zulu Natal. Because of poverty and bad hygiene, and the consumption of pork, the children suffer from a very high incidence of cerebral infestation with resultant fits. On x-ray, the cause of these fits was found to be due to cysts of the Cysticercous worm, lodged in the brain, which were causing the epilepsy. These cysts revealed tiny living worms, 'living *Jinn*' on the MNR Scanner.

Muslims were the first to reject the demoniacal origin of mental illness, long before the birth of western psychiatry. Mental patients in Europe, diagnosed as being bewitched, were burnt at the stake.⁸⁸ At least four centuries earlier, Islam had the first mental hospitals where patients were treated humanely. This again confirms, that during the decline of the Islamic Empire, distortion of the Islamic ideals occurred which resulted in invalid beliefs and false attributions, overriding previous advances. We have discoursed earlier that there is no place for belief in chthonic elements, as in the case of Goodman, or demons, that these are not objective reality, but projections of the mind, as claimed by Weston Le Barre, and that speech in an altered state of consciousness will be irrational to the observer.⁸⁹

The fact that in our investigation of some cases diagnosed by traditional healers as being possessed (*Jinn*) and successfully treated by medical therapy, is substantiated by Felicity Edward's exposition that 'spirit possession' is a syndrome of stress, i.e. total lack of power.

Exorcism rituals based the ratib

The Arabic word *majnun* (pl *majnanin*) 'is used to describe a diversity of

⁸⁸In the 1484 Pope Innocent VIII issued a Papal Bull in which he exhorted the clergy of Europe to leave no 'stone unturned in search of witches, based on the Bible Exodus 22:18. 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live'. *Abnormal Psychology*. eds., Gerald Davidson and John Neale, (New York: John Wiley, 1974), 11-18. Compare the teachings of Muhammad: 'Be kind to the mentally disturbed and the women'. Eight centuries before the West, the Mustansarriya Hospital in Bagdad had special wards for mental patients, where they were treated with aromatherapy, music, diet and *dhikr*. Their families stayed in, with the state providing stipends for them. M.W.Dols, *Majnun: The Madman in Medieval Society* (London: Oxford University Press, 1992), 170-173.

⁸⁹ Weston La Barre. 'Anthropological Perspectives on Hallucination and Hallucinogens' in R. K. Siegel and L.J. West. eds. *Hallucinations*, 10.

unusual behaviour which today we regard as being 'mentally ill' ...in Islamic society a wide variety of behaviour on the other hand is regarded as normal, which encompasses mystic states, being possessed by a *jinn*, psychological and organic disease'.⁹⁰ Any behaviour which is different from that of the community, accompanied by irrationality and alternating with periods of altered states of consciousness is regarded either as madness, magic, being bewitched, or possessed by a spirit, *ifrit* or *jinn*. Islamic society had its own methods of treatment for these.⁹¹ The *Hamadsha* is a Moroccan religious brotherhood, which venerates the saints, Sidi 'Ali bin Hamdush and Sidi Ahmad Dghughi. It is a healing cult in North African society, and the phenomenon is attributed to possession by a female spirit.⁹² The *Zar* in Egypt was a similar phenomenon as the *Hamadsha*, and also treated by the healers in *Sufi* cults. It was first introduced into the lower levels of society from the upper strata in the nineteenth century. Both of these ceremonies utilised *Dhikr* rituals, which can be classified as *Rawatib* since they consist of various combinations of recitals. Dols cites a case of *jinn* exorcism described by Blackman which in many respects is very similar to Shahsaheb's treatment. The '*afrit* wished to 'come out' through the patient's eye, which would have left him blind, but was checked by the shaikh, who asked him to exit from the big toe, which he did by knocking over a *kulleh* a bowl, which was stained with a few drops of blood resulting in complete recovery of the patient.⁹³ The *zar* differs from the *Hamadsha* by including a feast, known as the *sulheh*, (reconciliation) in the *slametan* ritual of Java and is considered to be propitiary.⁹⁴ Endogenous opioids are the main

⁹⁰M. W. Dols, *Majnun*, 3.

⁹¹Dols analyses the fables in *One Thousand and One Nights* as being a psychotherapeutic technique of the madman in many guises. The tales are of madness. Shahriyar becomes mad after witnessing the debauchery of his wife, who cures him by relating a story every night for 1000 days. Dols, *Majnun*, 2.

⁹²Victor Crapanzano, *The Hamadsha: Studies in Moroccan Ethno psychiatry*. (Berkeley: California, 1973).

⁹³M.W. Dols, *Majnun*, 230-2.

⁹⁴The Ceremony should not be regarded as 'group therapy of the modern type', according to Dols, but rather that the Jinn is held responsible for the patient's illness, but not by possession., but as punishment for having offended the spirits and therefore needing

agents for the cure.

S. G. Lee describes an initiation ceremony for the attainment of diviner status, the *isangoma*. When the neophyte is possessed by the spirit, she acquires *ukuthwasa* she 'emerges or comes out' (from the womb) after having spent a night sleeping out in the field, which is traditionally regarded as Mother Earth.⁹⁵ Tobler regards this as a rebirth.⁹⁶ Ari Kiev states that 'culture determines the specific ways in which individuals perceive and conceive of the environment and strongly influences the forms of conflict, behaviour and psychopathology'.⁹⁷ The loss of culture is particularly stressful to the 'educated yet still semi-primitive (sic) marginal African who has become a member of a partially urbanised and westernised society.' Lambo maintains 'that in many parts of Africa, especially the recently industrialised ones, there is a higher incidence of drug addiction, abnormal sexuality, delinquent and other anti-social behaviour'.⁹⁸

This situation applies to South Africa also, since there is an increased incidence of psychotic behaviour, usually diagnosed by the healers as 'possession'. There are a diversity of possession states amongst the indigenes in South Africa, such as the *Indiki*, occurring as an outbreak in Natal and Transvaal in 1911, which today affects industrialised workers, and is due to ancestor spirit possession, in contrast to the *Amafufuyane* Syndrome which is believed to be caused by alien spirits.⁹⁹ This is well exemplified in the *Amafufuyana Syndrome*, as evinced in a two year-long mass epidemic in 400 school girls at the Lamplau Junior Secondary School in the Macubeni

conciliation. The whole family takes part in the recovery and support of the patient. Dols, *Majnun*, 289-99.

⁹⁵S.G. Lee, 'Spirit Possession among the Zulu' in John Beatie and John Middleton, eds. *Spirit Mediumship and Society in South Africa* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), 128-156.

⁹⁶Judith Tobler, *Feminine*, 46.

⁹⁷Ari Kiev, *Transcultural Psychiatry* (New York: Free Press, 1972), xi.

⁹⁸T.A. Lambo, 'Malignant Anxiety: A syndrome associated with Criminal Conduct in Africans'. *Journal of Mental Science* 108, (1964), 256-264.

⁹⁹Harriet Sibisi (Ngubane) 'Spirit Possession in Zulu Cosmology.' in M.G. Whisson and M. West, eds. *Religion and Social Change* (Cape Town: David Phillip, 1975), 47-57.

District of Lady Frere.¹⁰⁰ The epidemic then spread through the school, the children ran *amok*, kicked their desks, rolling their eyes, hitting out with their fists, and sometimes running away.' The children attacked the supposed 'witch' and assaulted her, breaking her legs. When the police loaded some of the girls in the van, the girls went berserk, 'performed' so intensely, that the police were forced to release them.' Various causes were proposed for the occurrence of the *Amafufunyane* syndrome.

Ngubane suggested that it 'seems to be an aftermath of colonialism related to intrusions by alien peoples into a culture and society.' I. M. Lewis made a similar observation. Felicity Edwards remarked 'so as a result of a higher degree of mobility and industrial development..., competition from foreign intruders,...fellow Zulus, for jobs, housing, land,...increased the experience of insecurity to an intolerable level' ¹⁰¹ The failure to cope with socio-cultural disruption and with resultant insecurity, spiralled into increasing psychological disruption. She elaborated further that the 'form in which the insecurity is concretised in the illness indicates the nature of the disorder; i.e. alien spirits in the body to parallel alien intruders in the social structure. Ngubane states that we can add the sense of loss of control over one's life and destiny, to the above, 'look I am not in control of my own reality'. Loss of religious values, and absence of ritualistic support in a conflict situation and in our view, the fact of disempowerment and subjugation are crucial factors causing stress. Ari Kiev cites I.B. Amara who suggested that because the African child grows up in a society which does not 'freely sanction individuality, but emphasizes group activity' the individual in a changing society, or in process of social mobilisation, does not possess the necessary tools to cope with stress.¹⁰²

African life is hierarchal, highly organised and regulated by the tribal elders. With urbanisation, these social linkages are destroyed. The patient thus has no social

¹⁰⁰Felicity Souter Edwards, '*Amafufunyana* Spirit Possession: A Report on some recent Developments.' in *Religion in Southern Africa* 5, no. 2 (1984), 3-16.

¹⁰¹Felicity S. Edwards, '*Amafufunyana* Spirit Possession: Treatment and Interpretation' in *African-Christian Religion and Healing in South Africa*. eds. G.C. Oosthuizen, S.D. Edwards, W.H. Wessels, I Hexham, (Lewiston NY: Edward Mellen Press, 1988) Also in *African Studies* 8, (1988), 207-226.

¹⁰² Ari Kiev, *Transcultural*, 10.

anchors nor ritual resources. These factors were also evident in the ten cases of Jinn Possession that the author treated successfully amongst Muslims, after the traditional healers, had first diagnosed the cases as spirit possession. All the patients were found to have obscure, but identifiable somatic disease and treated effectively by conventional therapy.¹⁰³

Bourguignon holds that 'altered states of consciousness refers to a psycho-biological level of observation, and terms such as 'PossessionTrance' and 'Trance ' refer to categories of cultural interpretation.'¹⁰⁴ However she places both on a continuum, with REM Sleep on one end, Trance in the middle, and Possession Trance at the other end, with trance being regarded as a hallucination, shaman's trip, talking to spirits, glossolalia, as extensions which are now not only erroneous, but outdated categories.¹⁰⁵ Whilst we regard trances as an altered state of consciousness, to be a normal physiological process, which can voluntarily be triggered by many sensory stimuli, a possession state is pathological, abnormal state, and as it cannot be induced voluntarily, it is an abreaction:

a psycho-physiological malfunction. A possession state is a sign of personality dysfunction, and an inability to cope with stress., and a cry for integration into society.

¹⁰⁶ It is evidence of ritual impoverishment, a person cut of from his socio-religious

¹¹⁰G.M. Karim, 'Possession by Jinn? Some cases'. Paper presented in 1992 at the Annual Convention of the Islamic Medical Association, Durban, which made a plea for a more careful approach by medical practitioners to assess such cases earnestly, and a dialectic to the traditional practitioners, that the diagnosis of Possession is no longer tenable. The Qur'an 'limits the activities of angels and *jinn* to such as He permits,...thus linking them inextricably to the divine dependancy itself. The Prophet had desired that Gabriel should come more frequently, but was informed in Surah *al-Baqarah* that the angel had no volition, and could not appear without the divine imperative. (2:254-5). Isma'il al-Faruqi. 'Taqlid' ZYGON 2, (3 Sept. 1967): 234. This was affirmed in a personal communication to me at the Conference on Islamisation held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. 1984.

¹⁰⁴Erika Bourguignon, ed. *Religion, Altered States of Consciousness, and Social Change*. Columbus: Ohio State Univ Press, 1973), 13.

¹⁰⁵Erika Bourguignon, 'Altered States of Consciousness' in *Psychological Anthropology*. ed. Francis L.K. Hsu, (Cambridge Mass.: Schenkman Publishing, 1972), 424.

¹⁰⁶Ari Kiev, *Transcultural Psychiatry* (London: Macmillan, 1972), 9-11. Kiev proposed that social change, loss of old culture, urbanisation, stress of change itself, lack of cultural responses to psychotherapy. Felicity Edwards had a similar proposition. Our view is that lack

'roots.' If rituals are a means of empowerment, then possession states are a lack of it, and the condition was previously addressed by the deautomisation theory of Deikman, which cannot be substantiated.¹⁰⁷

In the biochemical approaches to mental health and disease, it is the imbalance of biochemical stabilisers, such as dopamine, serotonin, HT5 with opioids being one of them. Certain opioids cause dysphoria but the beta-endorphins have a euphoric effect. Gelhorn claims that Trance ritual is a form of catharsis, which is Freudian and entirely conjectural.¹⁰⁸ Freud defined 'religion as a man-made illusion...a universal neurosis, a kind of narcotic...which man will have to give up', and regarded religious rituals and beliefs as being 'obsessive compulsive disorders...as a return of long forgotten happenings of the primeval history of the human family.'¹⁰⁹ With the advent of the 'biochemical revolution' in psychiatry, Freudian concepts have long been discarded.¹¹⁰ Similarly, Freud's successor, Carl Jung's attempted to improve upon Freud's 'archetypes' by laying less emphasis on sexual attribution to mental illness and being more mystically and religiously orientated. Humanistic psychology founded by Gordon Allport, Abram Maslow and Carl Rogers displaced Jung's philosophical ideas on psychoanalysis. Walter Burkett proposes that 'to postulate that archetypal images of religious entities, of god or gods, are present in the human make-up which can be activated by appropriate stimuli...is equivalent to the 'innate release mechanisms'

of ritual, which indirectly means a lack of religion is the primary cause.

¹⁰⁷L. J. West, 'A Clinical and Theoretical Overview of Hallucinatory Phenomena' in R.K. Siegel and L.J. West, eds. *Hallucinations* (New York: John Wiley, 1979), 305.

¹⁰⁸Ari Kiev, *Transcultural*, 33. Citing Douyon, who stated that possession has a positive effect as a defence against deeper mental illness, Kiev maintains that this view stems from the belief that only 'cathartic' models provide release from 'dammed up' emotions' which prevents psychoneurotic disorders such as schizophrenia. Possession states actually provide a 'block to further sensory input' which enables the patient to recover over time.

¹⁰⁹S. Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (London: Pelican, 1973)

¹¹⁰Professor D. Macdiarmid of Guy's Hospital in his Review of Ellenberger's epic *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (London: Allen Lane, [1970] 1990) is vehement in his critique of Freud and Jung whom he accuses as 'the criminals who fragmented psychodynamic psychiatry'. Although Ellenberger claims to be 'rigorously impartial and abstaining from any kind of polemics', his response reveals his utter rejection of Freud's conjectural philosophical theories.

occurring in biology.¹¹¹ This implies a neurobiological basis which supports our standpoint below. Weston Le Barre, an anthropologist, represents the current status of knowledge on possession as 'the now wholly inadmissible 'demonological notion' that the body is in such a state possessed or held by an alien spirit.'¹¹²

Ari Kiev in a significant book has dealt with many conditions of 'culturally conditioned expressions of mental illness attributed to 'spirits' which are entirely amenable to 'folk-therapy'. Possession is a psychotic condition, and Juhasz and Sarbin insist 'that it is a metaphysical assertion that ghosts and spirits have no ontological status; therefore talk about them is foolish by definition'.¹¹³

In the whole Indic area, the ritual exorcism of demons is the traditional cure of a trance dance as described by Belo in her study *Trances in Bali*.¹¹⁴ Bruce Kapferer's study and analysis of Singhalese exorcism rituals as 'performances' is entirely speculative, although his erudition and exposition of rituals and 'performances' as being transformative is impressive and most useful.¹¹⁵ We find parallels with the Ceylonese exorcism rituals with Khoisan and Muslim healing rituals, the *Zar* used for exorcism in North Africa.¹¹⁶ Goodman's contacting the 'spirits of the ancients' is considered by La Barre as 'the nature of the Unknown is projected, not perceived'.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred*, 29.

¹¹²Weston LaBarre, 'Anthropological Perspectives on Hallucinations and Hallucinogens' in *Hallucinations*, 10.

¹¹³Theodor R. Sarbin & Joseph B Juhasz, 'The Social Context of Hallucinations' in *Hallucinations*, 241.

¹¹⁴Jane Belo, *Trance in Bali*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960). This is a comprehensive phenomenological record illustrated with photographs.

¹¹⁵Bruce Kapferer, 'Performance and the Structuring of Meaning and Experience' in Victor Turner and Edward Bruner, eds. *The Anthropology of Experience* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1986), 189-203.

¹¹⁶Anthropologists having a multi disciplinary approach are D'Aquili who is a psychiatrist as co-author with Charles Laughlin, an anthropologist, and John McManus is a psychologist. This approach is well represented in their two epochal works, *The Spectrum of Ritual* (1979) and *Brain, Symbol and Experience*. (1990).

¹¹⁷Weston La Barre, 'Anthropological Perspectives on Hallucination & Hallucinogens.' in Siegel and West, *Hallucinations*, 40.

Stress and the Immune System

Most of the research on the Immune system has been linked to Stress, and it has been demonstrated that emotions certainly affect the immune system, eg. it is suppressed during grief and stimulated during periods of positive attitudes. Kiev observes that the fact that there is very low incidence of depressive states in 'developing' countries implies that the population has its own culture-dependant therapy through rituals.¹¹⁸ Nutritional states, lack of protein in the diet, particularly lack of Vitamins of the B group play a major role in mental health. Deficiency of Niacin (Vitamin B6) leads to the phenomenon of Pellagra. Prior to fortification of mealie meal, the staple diet of Africans in rural areas of South Africa, a very high incidence of Pellagra occurred which is manifest as a triad of dementia, diarrhoea, and dermatitis. Ari Kiev is convinced that 'possession is a defensive mechanism against deeper mental illness' and that 'pre-scientific psychotherapy' or culture-specific 'methods' have a valuable role in the therapy of many behavioural deviations, and 'the more a psychotherapist succeeds in giving the impression of having 'magical powers', of still being the representative of god as the priest-doctors once were, the more he meets the longing of his patients for magic help. This is particularly seen in the imams at the Cape and the success they attained in tending to not only the spiritual and religious needs of the community of Muslims, but to their physical and psychological stresses as well.

The Imams as Healers

We observed that all the Imams were healers, exorcists, and most importantly, were teachers and prayer leaders. Many of these functions were performed *pro Deo*. They were the most respected of people in the nascent community, and performed a unique role at the Cape. There were no class distinctions, even a slave could rise to the post of imam, as in the case of Imam Abdolgaviel, of Simonstown in the 1820's. Each imam had a group of close followers, or *murids* which provides a clue to the typology of Islam prevalent in the early days. The use of the term implies a *tariqa*-centric Islam.

Another link was the voluntary contribution to the imam. The imam was the spiritual head and was maintained by monetary contributions which Lady Gordon Duff was informed was the *khams*. The term is significant, because it refers to what is a *shia*

¹¹⁸ Ari Kiev, *Transcultural*, 45, 58ff, 86ff.

requirement, or *wajib*, besides the religious tax of *Zakat*.¹¹⁹ It was for the maintenance of the prayer room and the imam. It is remarkable that during the stage of prohibition of Islam, mosques were not permitted to be built, in many cases it was the white employer who provided accommodation for the slaves as well as allowed use of a room for prayer. The Imam being a spiritual guide had to render social services, ranging from officiating at marriages, attending births to proclaiming the *adhan* (prayer call) in the baby's ear as well as providing names for them.

The ritual of burial in Islam is quite involved and Shell remarks that the dignified manner of Muslim burials led to conversions. White masters used to bury their slaves unceremoniously in shallow graves, whereas Muslims performed a ritual purification of the body *ghusl*, shrouded the deceased and ensured that graves were deep enough to prevent desecration by animals. Long communal prayers were held at the grave side, followed later by seven and forty day liturgical rituals. These too, point to a *shia'* influence. Their prime function, however was to provide an element of Islamic education. The imams acted as social workers, looking after the widows and orphaned children, and took in street children. They resolved religious problems and provided social counselling to their congregants. Such was the trust placed in them by the community, that they acted as bankers and custodians of communal property, as well as personal trusts.

✱

Achmat Davids suggests that many mosques were registered in the name of the Imam; and 'many inventories of the Imams show the names of the *murids* as the main debtors' (sic). The early Muslims believed that illness and disease could be cured or prevented by spiritual intervention, that the Imam could avert disease and disaster. He was thus in constant demand to provide remedies *isharat* or to write out on little square pieces of paper, talismans *ruqya* for apotropaic purposes. This availability of

¹¹⁹ Professor Sachedina of Virginia, in a lecture at the University of Cape Town Postgraduate Seminar, on the *Shi'a* faith, stated that the *shi'a* schools, religious foundations, and *imams* never received government or official patronage. They were maintained by private contributions, and thus were assured of their independence from the state. The tax of *khums* (lit. one fifth, or 20% of savings, after expenses) is compulsory, in addition to the 2.5% of the *Zakat*. The term became corrupted at the Cape into *kham*, which literally means five. The *khums* is considered to be an extra pillar to the usual five pillars, and placed a responsibility upon the people to contribute themselves to upliftment of the deprived'. This is a unique feature of *Shi'a* Islam.

the Imam as a spiritual healer for his 'murids' was an invaluable function. In some instances this role as spiritual healer was considered more important than leading the congregational prayers. The status of the Imams as healers and exorcists often

* conflicted with official medical practice. Dauids cites an article in the S.A. Commercial Advertiser of the 16th April 1840 wherein the Surgeon-Superintendent of the Chavonnes Hospital in Greenpoint, Dr Samuel Baily in reply to an anonymous writer L.L., remarked: '...the Mussalmans or Malays,...despise all our nostrums, and look with contempt on all our prophylactics (and refuse) to enter hospital.' ¹²⁰

During the smallpox epidemic Dauids describes what he considers to be probably constituting the first political protest by the Muslims.¹²¹ They were protesting against being buried in sealed caskets in pauper graves, or to be quarantined or be vaccinated against it. Justifying the street demonstration, a contemptuous declaration by Abdul Burns, that "our religion is superior to the Law" led to him being prosecuted and being sent to jail. Muslims believed that epidemics and disease were acts of God, which therefore were more amenable to spiritual methods, made them spurn treatment from medical sources. 'There prevailed a belief that Qur'anic words had tremendous power and could be used in appealing directly to God for relief from pain and suffering.'¹²² The Hindus had similar beliefs, only the nature of the 'sacred' differed. However suffering and illness were considered to be due to the gods being angered, and treatment consisted in propitiary offerings.

We have affirmed the nexus between ritual and trance and possession states, and psychological transformation, in which social mobilisation plays a large role, resulting in disruption of the old cosmology as expressed in traditional beliefs and *praxes*. It points for the urgent imperative of instilling a renewed religious basis with its accompanying set of rituals to lessen stress. Harriet Sibisi observes that since the

* ¹²⁰ Achmat Davids, 'Role of the Imam in the Nineteenth century Cape Muslim Community Medicine' in *Jimasa* 5, (Cape Town: March 1989), 19-21. See also an article by Ahmad el- Kadi 'Health and Healing in the Qur'an' in the same volume.

¹²¹ Achmat Davids, *History of Tana Baru*. We however regard the Ratib to have been the first protest ritual, dissimulated as 'entertainment', which even latter day Muslims could not decipher. (Cape Town: Tana Baru Committee, 1985).

¹²² Achmat Davids, *Tana Baru*, 19.

diviners and ethno-doctors do not recognise the *amafufunyana* and the *indiki* as 'often associated with failure to cope with the changing way life in colonial or industrialised' and in South Africa, an oppressive society, (it) threatens the very existence and continuity of Zulu society as a distinct entity. Hence prophylactic measures must be taken at a mystical level of treatment to reassure people that their young are protected.¹²³ In a reflexive perspective, this is affirmed by Ari Kiev who remarks that: 'in preliterate societies there is lowered incidence of depression.' which does confirm the proposition that every society has its own defences against psycho-social morbidity.¹²⁴

In view of a clash between two cosmic-worldviews', Archie Mafege is pessimistic that the Africans in Langa would ever abandon paganistic rituals like the circumcision rites, the birth rites for babies, *idinara yomntwana*, which fortunately coincides with baptismal rites, and still organise commemoration dinner parties for their departed heads of families...Similarly, witchcraft beliefs persist in Langa, if in a hidden way, only to erupt when individuals are in a crisis'. 'It is almost a platitude now among South African sociologists of religion to state that problems of mental and spiritual liberation cannot be comprehended independently of structural considerations'.¹²⁵ There exist in Langa, several churches, some of whom he calls 'fake' religions headed by uneducated as opposed to the established churches which have educated pastors. 'However none of these churches represented a rebellion against a white hierarchy in the church'. However, he suggests that: the 'fake' churches are as much of a rebellion against racial domination as they are against class domination. He critiques the Church of Zion, of 'Shembe, Lekganyane and Limba', as following 'antiquarian Christian values' such as healing by the 'Holy Ghost', 'prophesying' substituting gibberish for real,

¹²³Harriet Sibisi, 'Spirit Possession in Zulu Cosmology' in Whisson and West. (Eds) *Religion and Social Change*. (Cape Town: David Phillip, 1975), 57

¹²⁴Ari Kiev, *Transcultural Psychiatry* (New York: Free Press, 1972), xi

¹²⁵He narrates an incident when student Christian liberals from the white Stellenbosch University came to sell Bibles in Langa. 'In the polemic that developed between them and some Langa young men the basic question that arose was whether they, as white South Africans who had betrayed every teaching in the Bible, dared to approach the Africans in the name of the same Bible?'

analytical communication, inducing deliberate hysteria (*read Trance States*), and placing a taboo on all sorts of foods. They have not only reduced to a dangerous point their own sense of reality but are also fostering false consciousness among their followers.'

Like all cults, because they satisfy an inner need for power, as in the Kavadi, and the Ratib, these grow from strength to strength in the absence of better resources. Martin Prozesky is pessimistic about the 'structural considerations' which are imperative for a Christian solution, stating that the greatest error that the Church committed in the past was to side with the white government particularly the Calvinist Dutch Reformed Church, termed to be the 'apartheid government at prayer.'¹²⁶

With the miraculous advent of democracy, South Africa is still not free from intolerance, poverty and senseless violence and crime. Political freedom never ensures a moral revolution. For this to happen a radical shift in behaviour has to be instilled. The lessons to be learnt from the Ratib as an empowering ritual is that Islamic rituals are designed to instil a moral transformation. Skollies were changed to saints by the Ratib. Ossman Nagaty is emphatic that 'rites of worship are powerful tools to change behaviour. Belief in the Transcendental generates in man a tremendous fount of spiritual energy which changes the concept held by him of himself, of others, and of the world.'¹²⁷ An article in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* states that religious faith appears to buffer against life's stresses.¹²⁸

We are now enabled to postulate a hypothesis for the treatment of *Amafufunyane*, and other stress syndromes, *jinn* and all possession states. Since all ritual is hemostatic which requires a neurobiological explanation, which will be examined in the final chapter and unravelled to elicit that it is endogenous opioids which cause trance, points to their treatment by anti-opioid substances such as Naloxone. It has been predicted that with increasing social mobilisation, and diaphyses, mental stress will increase exponentially. Kutchings and Stuart Kirk suggest that most

¹²⁶Martin Prozesky, ed. *Christianity in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Southern Books, 1990).

¹²⁷ Mohamed Ossman Nagaty, 'The Holy Qur'an and Psychotherapy.' Proceedings of the Second World Conference on Islamic Medicine. Kuwait. 1982.

¹²⁸Kenneth S. Kendler, *American Journal of Psychiatry* 154, (1997), 322-29.

mental illness currently classified as medical are not medical but have a social basis.¹²⁹

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, considered to be the 'bible' of the American Psychiatric Association currently lists more than 300 mental syndromes, whilst at the peak of the postwar period, when stress was at its worst, it listed only 106 disorders. The authors examine this 'proliferation of madness' and find that many of these syndromes such as 'generalised anxiety disorder' from which 12 million Americans suffer, for which there is much abuse of 'tranquillising drugs' has fostered a huge drug industry. Neologisms are coined for common sense situations such as shyness being classified as Asperger's Disorder, and 'fugue' for travelling in foreign lands under an assumed name, to 'frotteurism' for the 'irresistible desire to sexually touch fellow passengers in public transport'. Ari Kiev called obsessive compulsive behaviour as Frigophobia.

It is fundamental to our claim that behaviour is socially conditioned and learnt, and that whilst in the east, as Dols has shown, the madman was accepted as being normal, in the west all non-conforming behaviour was regarded as deviant.¹³⁰ That despite varying cultural patterns, Ari Kiev concurs that there is a common psycho-physiological state causing an altered state of consciousness.¹³¹

Ritual as an adaptative mechanism and an empowerment tool, is a vital resource, the ideal 'technique' for the alleviation of the majority of these conditions, failing which modern man can always resort to pharmaceuticals to his detriment. The advantage of pharmaceuticals being used in the treatment of mental illness is that language barriers and cultural factors fall away, and the patient becomes more amenable to psychotherapy. Ari Kiev suggests that various techniques are used to place the body under stress, such as night vigils, fasting, isolation, heat and thirst as in the Sioux, the inhalation of carbon dioxide in the Delphi in Graeco-Roman era, which has an equivalence in the breath-holding among *Sufi* and Hindu rituals. His explanation of the sword piercing and playing with coal as occurs among the *Draupadi* and *Ratib*

¹²⁹Herb Kutchings and Stuart Kirk, *Making Us Crazy* (California: C.U. Press, 1997), 3-6.

¹³⁰Ari Kiev, *Transcultural*, 131.

¹³¹Ari Kiev, *Transcultural*, 29.

proponents, is that the body when exposed to extreme stress, causes dissociation. Advancing Bushell findings, our own metathesis claims that it is endorphins which alter the state of consciousness due to stress. Thus serendipitously we have a clue to the treatment and diagnosis of possession states. Anti-opioids could dramatically alter the outcome of all these states and clinical trials are indicated in anxiety disorders as well. Naloxone, is an opioid antagonist which points to the therapy of many of the other 'maladaptive syndromes', as suggested for example by Bushell in anorexia nervosa, and could most effectively be used for *amafufunyana*, *zar*, and *jinn possession* as well.

Schizophrenia poses a 'controversial and insoluble problem' in modern society, because its symptoms are culturally dependant, which makes diagnosis difficult.¹³² If ~~be~~ studied as an altered state of consciousness, then naltrexone, the longer acting tannate form of naloxone opens up an alternate frontier for its treatment. According to Dols, Muslims did not regard madness as a disease. They were very successful in medieval times in treating all types of mental illness, dividing madness into three categories of 'fool', the fool for God's sake being the ecstatic mystic. The holy fool was tolerated in Muslim society. The third category of the 'wise fool' referred to the feigned madness of the pious which was a ascetic form of piety. 'Thus a wide range of religious experience was both possible and commendable', and was tolerated in society.¹³³

In view of the fact that 'Southern Africa is religiously a microcosm of the whole world, having long been home to a diversity of faiths, but with little mutual contact and understanding amongst...of these faiths...now that we are moving towards a new future', religious ritual is a potent force to provide solutions to our free but troubled world, by a return to the original *Homo sapiens* who is *Homo religiosus*.¹³⁴

¹³²Edward Hare, 'Schizophrenia as a Recent Disease' in *British Journal of Psychiatry* 153 (1988), 521-31.

¹³³ Dols, *Majnun*, 12-13.

¹³⁴John de Gruchy & Martin Prozesky, eds. *Guide*, 2. It is regrettable that J.S. Kruger's study *Along Edges*, did not consider Islam as well, since the latter has greater relevance and affiliation to African Traditional Religions in South Africa than either Buddhism or Christianity.

(SAW.)

The great venture of Muhammad and of the early Muslims still has implications that have not been worked out, a constant stimulus to those for whom the Qur'an had become a sacred text. Its latent challenges roused many to try to win through to their aims. We are speaking here not of religion generally, but of personal piety- that is a person's spiritual devotion: his manner of response to the divine, to what he finds to transcend the order of nature, to a felt cosmic dimension of life giving it ultimate meaningfulness.

Marshall Hodgson¹

Drawing upon Marshall Hodgson's observation that 'personal piety is the core of religion', our study has focussed on the piety of a section of downtrodden and subjugated Muslim slaves on the southern tip of the African continent, who overcame all odds and have left a heritage that has become a significant part of the 'rainbow nation', indeed playing a major role in its formative and social structures, far beyond their numerical proportions.² Achmat Davids' epochal studies have demonstrated the stupendous contribution of Muslims to the birth of the language, literature and culture of the Afrikaners.³

The first organised religious activity performed by the early Muslims in public at the Cape of Good Hope was the dramatic ritual of the Ratib. In his study on the *ta'ziyyah*, Schubel declared that 'theatre was employed to bring religion to the poor

¹Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilisation* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, Vol 1. 1977), 360.

² Robert Shell claims that Piet Retief, a Voortrekker leader was a descendant of the Rajah of Tamboura (Goa) who was exiled to the Cape in 1697. Robert C-H. Shell, 'From Rites to Rebellion: Islamic Conversion at the Cape. 1808-1915.' *Studies in the History of Cape Town*. Vol. 5. (Cape Town: Centre for African Studies, 1984.)

³ Achmat Davids, 'The Development of Afrikaans: The Muslim Contribution' *The South African Outlook*. Vol. 12, (1982), 1336. On the cultural aspects see: G. M. Karim, 'The Contribution of Muslims to South African Culture' in *BICMURA*. Birmingham. Vol 2, no.1. (1984:1-10).

and illiterate', whilst Annemarie Schimmel commented that 'plays were invented to make a sacred event visible'.⁴ In the context of the socio-political reality at the Cape, where the public or private expression of Islam was banned on pain of death, the *Ratib* was destined to play, an as yet unrecorded role in the unique life of the early Muslims. Both from a neurobiological and religious standpoint, the study of the *Ratib* has yielded unexpected, fascinating perspectives. Previous works regarded the *Ratib* as being part of 'folk' or 'popular Islam'. Remarking on the different forms of contrasting piety in the Islamic empire during the time of Caliphs al-Rashid and al-Mamun (813-945 CE) Hodgson correctly maintained that these diverse forms 'jostled and enriched' each other, but were differing expressions of piety.⁵ Thus he derived the notion of a 'popular Islam', but misread the two expressions as being diverse, either 'great' or 'little'. Richard Martin contends that '*Islam* connotes religious practise rather than beliefs'.⁶ The piety of the early Muslims at the Cape was indeed unique. Schubel has demonstrated the bifurcation between the two major historico-politically based interpretations of Islam resulting in multifarious expressions, the textualist compared with the experiential or emotional, which are usually termed the 'normative' and the protestant *Shi'a* and mystical respectively. We have shown that the two are actually integrative, the experiential as in so far as the origin of Islam is concerned, is the primal and emotive, whilst what is regarded as the normative was a later codification by the theologians and more especially western academics. The notions of great and little, folk, popular and mystical serve rather a taxonomic function than an appraisal of the veiled canvas that is Islam, which led Kritzech and Lewis to remark that 'Islam wears many masks in Africa'. The *Ratib* at the Cape was indeed such to many Muslims as

⁴Annemarie Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God: A phenomenological Approach to Islam*. (New York: SUNY, 1994), 102.

⁵ Marshall Hodgson, *Venture*, 307, errs when he claims that the older traditions of the *dhimmi* populations in the 'high caliphate' made their 'contribution to the spirituality which now took place within Islam', whereas the 'spiritual' dimensions, arose *ab initio* with the first revelation.

⁶Richard Martin, *Islamic Studies*. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1996), 126.

well.⁷ As late as 1997 Suleman Dangor still regards the *Ratib* as having Hindu roots, since he comments that although the 'recitals are Islamic, the actions are not'.⁸ He still employs the term coined by Geertz followed by Achmat Davids of a 'syncretic Islam' at the Cape as the mystical 'face' eluded them. We concur with Talal Asad, who stated that 'a practice is Islamic because it is authorised by the discursive traditions of Islam, and is so taught to Muslims - whether by an '*alim*, a *khatib*, a *Sufi shaykh*, or an untutored parent'.⁹

Previous academic studies on the *Ratib* by non-Muslims, such as Chambers, and Alexandra Wilcox have established that it is an Islamic ritual, whilst Desmond Desai has concluded that it is an Islamic musical art-form, despite the views of earlier Muslim scholars who followed Geertz and which held sway for some decades, that it was an animistic or Buddhist ritual.¹⁰ The piety of the early Muslims at the Cape was essentially *eros*-centric, recognising that mysticism is integral to the formalistic *nomo*-centric expression of Islam. The latter is eclectically regarded by the regnant majority of scholars as normative. The mystical expression of the *Ratib* was thus not of an elite class, as in the mysticism of Hinduism, but it was a mystical expression of Islam not accessible to the scholastics, the monarchy, the wealthy, or the generality. It was an expression of Islam, confined at the Cape to the downtrodden. It can be truly termed as

⁷Suleman Dangor, 'The Expression of Islam in South Africa.' *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*. Vol. 17, no. 1, (1997), 141. Although he used the term 'faces', he erred in discerning the major role of the *tariqas* and ascribes many earlier rituals of the Muslims at the Cape as having a 'Catholic or Lutheran' origin. He overlooked the mystical origin of the *Ratib* and follows du Plessis in ascribing a Hindu origin to the ritual.

⁸Suleman Dangor, 'The Expression of Islam in South Africa'. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*. (1997), 143. This is an example of a fallacy to which the phenomenologists of yore were prone to, by following a 'bottom-up' approach.

⁹Talal Asad, *Towards an Anthropology of Islam* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1986), 15. We have traced the origins of the *Ratib* to the heartlands of Islam, to the experience of its founder at Medina.

¹⁰Achmat Davids in his earlier *Mosques of the Bo-Kaap* (1980), 33 stated that it was probably of Hindu origin. He changed his view later as a result of the influence of his co-author Yusuf da Costa in *Pages from Cape Muslim History*. (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter. 1994) See the final chapter 'The Influence of *Tasawwuf* on Islamic Practises at the Cape' by Yusuf da Costa, where the *Ratib* is deemed to be a practice of the *Sufis*. Suleman Dangor says the recitals are Islamic but the performance is not. 'Expression of Islam' (1997), 143.

the 'democratisation' of mysticism, because it led in a sense to their empowerment.

Since the *Ratib* was dissimulated as 'entertainment' it could also be regarded as the first political protest against the social order at the Cape, and thus was uniquely, a politicisation of mysticism. The ritual demonstrates the nexus between the protestant *Shi'a* expression of Islam and a dramatic form of *tasawwuf*. This is evinced by the inclusion of chains in the ritual, symbolic of the journey of the family of the Prophet's (SAW) martyred grandson at Kerbala as prisoners, the use of flags which are distinctive of the *julus* protestant street demonstrations of the *ta'ziyyah* mourning rites during the month of *Muharrum*, and the presence of the invocation *Ya Madad* as well as the *panjtan*, the symbolic hand representing the five 'chosen' members, *ahl al 'aba* of the Prophet's family who were under his cloak, 'aba, meaning protection.¹¹ The root paradigms of *Sunni* piety is formalistic and scripturalistic, based on the texts of the Qur'an and the *Hadith*, whilst the *Shi'a* interpretation owes an emotional allegiance to the Prophet, and his family, followed by a long chain of Imams and living divines whose qualifications are based on both external and internal piety rather than scholastic achievements.¹² The Qur'an is revered by the *Shi'a* because it is a miracle associated with the personage of Muhammad, rather than the paradigm of the *Sunni* of it being sacred because it represents the word of God.¹³ The ascetic practices of the Prophet, his retreats in the cave of Hira, and love of God rather than legalism is emulated by the followers of *tasawwuf*. Imam Malik, one of the founders of the four *mazhabs* in *Sunni* Islam propounded an integralistic view, that to follow Islam as law, *fiqh* without following *tasawwuf*, and to follow only the mystical elements, whilst

¹¹ In the description by Desai, (1993), 303 one of the 'banks' had what was claimed to be the apotropaic hand of Fatima, the Prophet's daughter. However, Annemarie Schimmel asserts that this well known symbol, the *panjtan* represents the five sacred personages of the Prophet, his daughter Fatima, her husband Ali, and their two sons, Hassan and Husayn, who were blessed with *tasawwuf* (purity). Schimmel, *Phenomenology*, 79. } R.A

¹² Vernon James Schubel, *Religious Performances in Contemporary Islam* (Columbia: University of South California Press, 1993), 4, 21, 74.

¹³ Schubel, *Religious Performances*, 21.

neglecting the legal, was an incomplete Islam.¹⁴ Nasr maintains that the anagogical level in Islam was achieved much earlier than its sister traditions of Judaism and Christianity, indeed from the Qur'an and the *sunnah* of the Prophet himself.¹⁵ It is of salience that the origins of Islam commenced as experiential 'religion' and progressed into asceticism, *Zuhd*, which later developed into the formal term of *tasawwuf*.¹⁶ Richard Martin is explicit that the *Sufi* orders are derived from the Qur'an and *Sunna*, but the *sufis* lived as a community, rather than as society.¹⁷ Gilsenan has demonstrated that Muslim societies adhering to the rituals of the mystics in Egypt as 'normative', were dislodged by political forces and debased into formal religion by social mobilisation. Acculturation of Muslims by foreign or 'modern' traditions has been lamented and exposed within the *sophia perennis* school by Whitall Perry, Gai Eaton, Rene Guenon, and expounded amongst others by William Stoddart, Martin Lings, Frithjof Schuon and Sayyid Hussein Nasr.¹⁸

Transition in typology of Islam

¹⁴ S. H. Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, 125. He considers the word '*Sufism*' as a western deformation. He employs the metaphor of a circle to represent the law (*shari'ah*) and the radii as the way (*tariqah*). The law is the circumference which protects the centre. The radii are the many ways to the centre. In Islam, one cannot enter 'a way' without crossing the circumference, the observance of the law. *Tasawwuf* implies the integration of the law and the way. Many of the Ratib *khalifas* misconceived the *tariqah* as referring to the trance. Imam Malik was following al-Hujwiri: 'The law without the Truth is ostentation, while the Truth without the law is hypocrisy'. The Truth refers to the inner, and the law to the outer dimensions of Islam. R. A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, (1979), 92.

¹⁵ S.H. Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (New York: SUNY, 1989), 299. There are three 'basic ways to God' based either on fear, love or knowledge, corresponding to the mystical stations of contraction, expansion and union, which are present in all traditions in varying degrees. In Judaism there was a greater element of fear, whilst Christianity had the element of love, and Islam was founded on religious experience, which has the largest element of knowledge. We differ from Nasr on the stage of 'union' since from the all the literature on *tasawwuf*, from the earliest exponents being that of al-Hujwiri and al-Qushayri, to the later majority, are categoric that 'union' between the Creator and the contingent is impossible.

¹⁶ Fedwa-Malti Douglas, in *Asceticism*, Valantasis and Wimbush eds. (New York: O.U.P, 1995), xxi.

¹⁷ Martin, *Islamic Studies*, 239-240.

¹⁸ S. H. Nasr and Katherine O'Brien, eds. *In Quest of the Sacred* (Oakton. VA.: FTS Press, 1994).

After more than a century, the expression at the Cape tilted towards *shari'ah*-centric due to the establishment of a *madressah* in 1793 and the construction of the first mosque in 1797. This was only possible after the first British occupation in 1795, which overlooked the prohibition, but did not rescind the *plakaat* (edict). Thus a transformation of the expression of Islam was related to political change. Political factors were the main agents of change from the *tariqah*-centric to the *nomo-centric* in Muslim countries as well.¹⁹ We emend Ebrahim Moosa's three phases in the genealogy of Islam in South Africa by delineating four phases, to accord with socio-political reality.²⁰ The first phase started with the arrival of the Muslims at the Cape, from 1657 and is termed the stage of prohibition of Islam, which lasted until 1793. The release of Qadi Abdus Salaam from Robben Island, the initiation of the first *madressa* and mosque, the *Awwal* Mosque is the commencement of the second stage of the establishment of Islam. The phase of a *shari'ah* centric Islam could now displace the *tariqah* centric Islam from centre stage. However many of the mystical rituals such as the *Rawatib*, the weekly *hadra* or the calendrical *merang* and the *Milad* remained.²¹ The imams still practised the art of healing by talismans and the sacred word.²² With the arrival of the Muslims in Natal in 1860, the third stage of consolidation commenced. Amongst the first group of indentured labourers, between six and ten percent were Muslims, and in the second group landing at Durban in 1871 who were termed 'passenger Indians', almost 80 percent were Muslims.²³ These were the traders, who had financial resources to build mosques, establish schools and 'import' many '*ulama*

¹⁹ Zafar Bangash, ed. *In Pursuit of the Power of Islam: Major Writings of Kalim Siddiqui*. (London: Open Press, 1996), 259. He observes that the 'Arab leaders accepted freedom from the *Uthmaniya* State as a fair reward for subservience to the west'.

²⁰ Ebrahim Moosa, *Discursive Voices*, 57. The first is the period of white settlement, exploitation and conquest between 1488 to 1902; second which signalled the end of the Anglo-Boer war, and the formation of the Union of South Africa (1910), the progressive institution of racial discrimination leading to the formation of the 'apartheid era' and its demise in 1994 with the formation of a government of 'national unity' would constitute the third phase.

²¹ R-C. Shell, Interview with Achmat Davids. (1984), 57.

²² Lady Duff-Gordon, *Letters*, 60.

²³ Tayob, *Resurgent Movements*, 55.

from the Indian subcontinent whose role in South Africa and its politics deserve study.²⁴ With the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990, the fourth and final stage of fulfilment now ensues when Muslims enjoy legal equality with the social freedom to practice and preach their religion without let or hindrance.²⁵ A landmark *fatwa* was passed by the Muslim Judicial Council at the Cape, in a veiled criticism of the *apartheid* authorities citing the Qur'anic verse: 'that sovereignty is vested in the Almighty alone', and admonishing that despite its military and economic might, the government would not be invincible.²⁶ With the necessity of pluralism, new challenges will require adaptations, one of the first steps towards this being addressed by a conference convened by Muslim academics, held in 1995 at Unisa with the theme 'Islam and Civil Society'.²⁷ Farid Essack's timely work calls for a 'rethink of Islam in a plural society'.²⁸

²⁴This does not imply that there were no scholastics at the Cape. Shell mentions the presence of several Indonesian '*ullemma*' (sic) who formed the first clerisy group at the Cape who held weekly prayers and discussions at their homes. Shell, *From Rites to Rebellion*, (1984), 35. This was the practice of 'house *madressas*' as initiated by many *khalifas*, eg one of them we interviewed was teaching 'forty children for forty years' *pro deo*.

²⁵ The fulfilment applies to a majority situation when the theological term is *dar al Islam*.

²⁶ Gerrie Lubbe, 'The Soweto *Fatwa*: A Muslim response to a watershed event in South Africa'. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*. Vol 17, no.2. (1997), 339. Contrasting the theological bodies in the Transvaal and Natal, who did not venture any criticism of the state. Lubbe regards the difference between the Cape response and that 'up North' as being due to the respective constituents of the Councils. Whilst at the Cape, the MJC was composed of *imams*, *shaiques*, and *ulama*, the councils of Natal and the Transvaal were confined to theologians and less representative of the will of the community, since many of the *imams* at the Cape were lay preachers.

²⁷ Richard Martin, 'The Conference on Islam and Civil Society in South Africa: Prospects for Tolerance and Conflict Resolution: A Report.' *Journal for Islamic Studies*. Rand Afrikaans University. Vol. 14, (1994), 201-205. Muslim academics will find his statement that 'South Africa is not an Islamicate society and never will be,' arguable, as the future status of Christianity is tarnished by the links by the official Dutch Reformed Church with *apartheid*. The pessimism of academics about the future of Christianity in South Africa is well argued by a panel under Martin Prozesky, ed. *Christianity in South Africa*. (Johannesburg: Southern Books, 1990).

²⁸ John Hick's review of Farid Essack's *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism*. (1996: frontispiece). This implies a sociopolitical interpretation of the Qur'an, leading to a dynamic expression, compared to the 'static' formalistic exclusive Islam of the textualist. Prof. Aziz Sachedina of the University of Virginia, at a Lecture at the University of Cape Town stated that the Qur'an is the most pluralistic of revelations. 'Islamic Theology for the 21st Century.'

(continued...)

Gerald Lubbe suggests that the challenge to Muslims in South Africa 'is to become less Indian...and to adopt a more African outlook'.²⁹ He implies a less ultra-conservative outlook in keeping with the unique local context. Trimingham's observation that it was the rituals of Islam, rather than dogma which led to conversion in Africa has implications for *daw'ah* in South Africa.

Towards a hypothesis on trance

Charles Laughlin et al., in their opening sentence to their pioneering work *Brain Symbol and Experience* state that 'all of science, anthropology included is in a crisis of self-reflection'...'a period of transformation'...'away from the mechanistic, positivistic, hyper-rational conception of science toward one that is more holistic, reflexive, creatively intuitive.' Our multidisciplinary study arches across several fields starting with physical anthropology, embracing religious studies to progress through the study of ritual, specifically the enigma of trance rituals, asceticism, mysticism, and the association with possession states, reducing to the neuro-biological influences on consciousness and ending as a statement: that of stimulation of the immune system.

It is an advance in that we propose an alternate holistic hypothesis for the explanation of trance rituals and the associated constellation of phenomena as D'Aquili et al suggested. Our aim is to comply with the requirements of D'Aquili and his associates of a unifying theory, that the more sources of information and related phenomenological data that one gathers through an 'empirical prism' in formulating a theory, the more veracious will the product be.³⁰ Bushell utilised the root paradigm of fasting, since it is a biological phenomenon, with its associated manifestations of ascetic practices, such as celibacy, sleep deprivation, self mortification, meditation, prostrations representative of prolonged physical exertion, and chants to formulate a new theory of asceticism.

²⁸(...continued)

19 August 1997. *Surah Fath* is specific about the pluralism when it refers to the 'marks of piety' on the 'forehead of those who prostrate excessively as it appears in the Torah and the Gospels'. (48:29)

²⁹G. Lubbe, 'Islam in South Africa: Enemy or Ally?' *BICMURA*. (Birmingham, 1985), 3:1:11.

³⁰D'Aquili et al., *Spectrum*, 2, 15, 45.

Our study is not only more amenable to biochemical validation, but the equivalents of trance rituals can be replicated in the laboratory. This opens up the possibility of evaluating alternate therapeutic methods for a host of conditions, such as the use of Naloxone (an opioid antagonist) in the treatment of *Amafufuyana*, for glossolalia and possession states, which would be specific instead of the agonal current treatment by sedatives and tranquillisers. Naloxone by injection would result in almost instantaneous psychological normalisation.³¹ A similar situation has been observed in anorexia nervosa in predominantly urbanised western societies.³² The conventional therapy for this condition does not yield satisfactory results. However the longer acting naltrexone offers superior results since it also specific, it is 17 times more potent and longer acting than naloxone, and does not cause dysphoria offering more promise for this often fatal condition.³³

Supplementary to the three cladogenic anatomical constituents of early man, the fourth vital component is the voluntary inculcation of trance rituals, which demarcate *Homo sapiens* from *Homo habilis*. The implication of the promethean appearance of culture formation, whose transmission is dependent on language, is that one has to consider a sudden leap from nonverbal man to speaking humans.³⁴ Pontifical man is endowed with inborn mechanisms for homeostasis induced by trance rituals

³¹Allylnoroxymorphone Hydrochloride. U.S.P. EN 1530.

³²A. Yates, *Compulsive Exercise and Eating Disorders* (New York Brunner-Mazel, 1991),76. During fasting, there is an initial rise in opioids. In anorexics, the continued production was neutralised by naloxone which resulted in a ten fold weight gain, as cited in Bushell (1995b),65.

³³Ainley Wade, (ed) *Martindale - The Extra Pharmacopoeia. 27th Edition.* (London:The Pharmaceutical Press. 1988),1784. Naltrexone is 17-Cyclopropylmethyl-4,5 a-epoxy -3,14 dihydromorphinan -6-one hydrochloride. The zinc tannate form is also longer acting. Bushell warns against the dangers of the side effects of naloxone itself since the antagonists interfere with consciousness. Bushell (1995b), 19.

³⁴S.H. Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (Albany. SUNY, 1989),161. He defines 'promethean' as modern man who 'has rebelled against heaven and tried to misappropriate the role of the Divinity for himself', as compared to 'traditional or pontifical man who lives in the world which has both an Origin and a Centre '. This contrasts with our use of the word in an anatomical sense, by the sudden appearance of encephalisation, speech and culture formation of *Homo religiosus*. Pontifical is derived from *pontifex*, a bridge.

necessitating culture formation, and beliefs, i.e. religion and ritual.³⁵ The term *Homo religiosus* is an advance upon *Homo sapiens* as it denotes a belief in the sacred, coupled with Nasr's term of 'dialectic methods', for rituals, or Eliadian 'techniques' combined with concepts such as *eschatology* in the Abrahamic traditions.³⁶ This thesis brings to fruition the definition of religion by Thomas Luckmann whose apt summation of the various definitions best represents our perspective: 'religion is that activity...which allows human beings to rise above or go beyond the purely biological functioning of their physical organisms'.³⁷ Richard Torrance is emphatic that man is more than an *animal rationale*, not only a *Homo sapiens* but *Homo quaerens sapientiam*.³⁸ Nasr affirms that man constructs a two dimensional world, and is constantly engaged in a quest for the transcendent.³⁹ This is pre-eminently seen in the rituals of the ascetics and mystics. The *Ratib* is a demonstration by the religious *virtuosi* of indeed going beyond the biological and the *Ratib* is thus a quest for the sacred. It has been equated with a 'journey' or a minor pilgrimage. It is a pervasive misconception, probably influenced by Buddhist interpretations, that the *Sufis* through their rituals aim towards 'union' with the transcendent Other. The foremost authors on *Tasawwuf* are categorical that the Creator and the created are two distinct entities which

³⁵Alan Mann, 'Hominid and Cultural Origins' in *Man* NS. Vol. 7, no. 3 (September 1972), 379-386. He lists the identifiable characteristics distinguishing man from non-human primates, both behavioural and anatomical, from studies by various anthropologists ranging from toolmaking (Oakley 1954), Language (Lenneberg 1967); a moral code (Kortland and Kooii 1963); 'culture' (Blum 1963); 'family' within a complex social organisation (de Vore 1971); bipedalism, small incisor teeth, large brains, smaller facies, (Pilbeam 1968); year round sexual receptivity, with loss of oestrus, little sexual dimorphism (Fox 1968). Makes an interesting observation that pongids display incest taboos, which implies that the biblical origins of the human family are part of mythology. The Quran stresses the separate creation of Adam and Eve *ab initio*.

³⁶Compared to Islamic and Judaistic mysticism, Katz remarks that Christianity has the least developed techniques. Steven Katz, *Mysticism and Language* (1992), 15. However Bushell's work on Christian eremiticism in Ethiopia disproves his opinion. Burkert, Mostert, and Jung argued for a position of religion being *sui generis*, which is also our standpoint.

³⁷Cited in David Chidester in de Gruchy and Prozesky, *Guide*, (1991), 31, 15.

³⁸Robert M. Torrance, *The Spiritual Quest: Transcendence in Myth, Religion and Science*. (Berkeley: University of California, 1994), 57.

³⁹Nasr, *Ideals and Realities*, 27.

can never unite.⁴⁰ Mir Valiudin argues that there are so many disparities between the contingent and the Creator, that a comparison is invalid, let alone a union, since God is neither space nor time-bound.⁴¹

Whilst Nasr holds that promethean man represents a generation having lost the sense of the sacred, our view is that promethean man refers to the anatomical advance (cladogenesis) by being the first to realise a quest for the sacred Other, and it is modern man who has lost his sacred linkage.⁴²

Judith Tobler following Felicitas Goodman's proposition that an 'archetypal ritual structure originated from hunter-gatherer societies, underpinned by an exclusively feminine symbolic dramatisation of birth' is an example of speculation which is a stepping stone of this study.⁴³ Goodman suggested that 'the underlying matrix of these rituals was the gripping drama of birth'.⁴⁴ Lawson and McCauley accused these studies of 'philosophical debitage' which retarded studies in religion.⁴⁵ Since the origins and function of ritual propounded by the biogenetic structuralist school, is primarily that of homeostasis, our study is more comprehensive in that it has elicited the biochemical mediators of this reaction, which is universal and thus not specifically gender related, although utilised by females.⁴⁶ We have investigated a dramatic ritual that inculcates

⁴⁰M.A.H. Ansari, *Sufism and Shari'ah*. (London: Islamic Foundation, 1986), 55
This is a translation of Sirhindi's work on Ibn Taymiyyah's views on *tasawwuf*. Most of the sufis regard union as a matter of vision, *shuhudi*, rather than reality, '*Ayni*, i.e. an experience rather than fact. In R. A. Nicholson's translation of one of the earliest treatises on *tasawwuf*, the *Kashf al Madhjub* by al-Hujwiri states that al-Hujwiri 'strenuously resists and pronounces heretical the doctrine that human personality can be merged and extinguished in the being of God.' R. A. Nicholson, *Kashf al madhjub* (London: Luzac, 1957), xiii.

⁴¹Mir Valiudin. *Quranic Sufism*. (Delhi: Bansaridas, 1959), 48-49, 56.

⁴²S. H. Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (New York: SUNY, 1989), 327, 161. He states that the 'goal of sacred knowledge is deliverance and union'. We demur regarding 'union'.

⁴³Felicitas Goodman, *Ecstasy, Ritual and Alternate Reality: Religion in a Pluralistic world*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 8.

⁴⁴ Felicitas Goodman, *Ecstasy, Ritual*, 32.

⁴⁵Lawson and McCauley, *Rethinking Religion*.

⁴⁶Judith Tobler, *Feminine Principles, Women's Practices; A Comparative Study of Ecstatic States* (continued...)

trance, which has no relation to the feminine principle, in fact females are barred from performing the *Ratib*. Judith Tobler argues that 'the archetypal feminine ritual structure provides a potential for the unification of feminine and masculine, and for the initiation of ecstatic states and experience of an 'alternate reality'.'⁴⁷

D'Aquili, et al, have been cited earlier to have concluded that it is only the species of man which utilises ritual for the production of an altered state of consciousness. Remarkable then is the fact the only existent hunter-gatherer Khoisan, regarded 'as living fossils' by Tobias, utilised dances which induced trance states, stem from the religious experiences in a pre-literate community, no matter what they conceived the sacred to be, and that Islam, which in a historical sense, is the last revealed religion in the Abrahamic triad, or the 'final and perfected way' as the Qur'an states, has the most sophisticated and advanced institutionalised ritual.⁴⁸ It is our hypothesis, that the Islamic rituals are uniquely structured and institutionalised for the production of endogenous opioids. Bushell has demonstrated a similarity in Christian eremiticism.⁴⁹ This would accord with Walter Burkert's assertion in his Gifford Lectures, that the performance of ritual 'grows out of anxiety' and his argument that the emotions of fear, anxiety and terror have 'close biological functions in protecting life', actually signifies a biological component in religion which has a homeostatic function mediated through ritual.⁵⁰

⁴⁶(...continued)
in *Zulu Traditions and Hinduism in Natal*. Unpublished B.A. Honours Thesis. University of Cape Town. (1993), 77.

⁴⁷Judith Tobler, *Feminine Principles*, 47. This demonstrates the danger of generalisation upon confining data to a specific traditions.

⁴⁸In his Last Sermon on Mount Arafat Muhammad received the final revelation: 'This day have I perfected your *Deen* and completed my favours unto you, and chosen Islam for you as a religion'. *Surah Ma'ida* 5:3. See also *al-Imran* 3:19, and 3:85.

⁴⁹William C. Bushell, *Psychophysiological and Cross-Cultural Dimensions of Ascetico-Meditational Practices: Special reference to the Christian Hermits of Ethiopia and application to theory in Anthropology and Religious Studies*. Ph. D. dissertation. University of Columbia. 1995. Chapters 2 and 3. 60-220.

⁵⁰Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religions*. (London:Harvard University Press, 1996), 36, 31, 40. Burkert makes an interesting comment that 'Religion and
(continued...)

Our proposal for an alternate hypothesis on the neurobiology of trance stems from several observations and deductions of trance rituals. A *Ratib jamat* went to Robben Island to perform the *Ratib*. The 'white' warders who had none of the claimed 'protective' sacraments, which are a pre-requisite for the rite; by not being in a 'purified' state of *wudu*, nor having recited the *Dhikr* or struck the tambourines nor had any *iman* (faith), partook in the *Ratib* and allowed themselves to be 'skewered'.⁵¹ The Khoisan dances and the *Kavadi* were rituals from completely variant traditions, yet had marked similarity with the acts of the *Ratib*. The answer to the Homologous phenomena points to an isomorphism: a neurobiological reaction purportedly confined to *Homo sapiens*, who alone can voluntarily and actively induce trance.⁵²

Barbara Lex provides a founding statement for our study on the neurobiological reactions engendered by the rituals: 'Ritual trance, ...arises from a manipulation of universal neurophysiological structures of the human body, lies within the potential of all human beings, and functions as a homeostatic mechanism for both individuals and groups...' ⁵³

A survey of previous views on the neurobiology of trance rituals is essential in order to propose alternate hypotheses. Arnold Ludwig found that although the 'outward manifestations and subjective experiences' differed, there were basic features present in the altered states of consciousness.⁵⁴ This was an advance on Hans Penner's view that

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Zoology join hands' in several cases of protective biological devices employed by spiders, which shed pulsating legs that serve as a decoy to enable the spider to slide away, to the breaking off of a lizard's tail, (which will regenerate later) so that the animal can escape. He equates this phenomenon to the *pars pro toto* principle in religious sacrifice.

⁵¹Laughlin et al., *Brain, Symbol and experience*, termed this phenomenon 'transference'. Muslims attribute it to '*sakinah*', the sacred presence inculcated by either their patron saint, or other spiritual agency.

⁵²Walter Burkert describes 'chimpanzees who in the wild like to drum and dance', probably because of the pleasure they derived from it. Our own conclusions claim that endogenous opioids cannot be the endowment of humans only, since animals do have haematological and immunological structures analogous to man.

⁵³ Barbara W. Lex, 'The Neurobiology of Ritual Trance' in D'Aquili et al., *Spectrum*, 118.

⁵⁴Arnold Ludwig, 'Altered States of Consciousness.' in Charles Tart, ed. (1969), 22.

there is no 'common core' to mysticism.⁵⁵ Arthur Deikman reviewed the prevailing theories of meditative 'states'. He attributed the phenomenon of mystic states to 'deautomisation of intrapsychic structures'.⁵⁶ Gelhorn and his colleagues suggested a theory of 'tuning' of the autonomic nervous system by studying brain responses to repeated stimuli; Orenstein proposed the theory of lateralisation, that the right hemisphere, 'previously thought to be unspecialised and subordinate to the 'dominant' left (in most right handed and in the majority of left handed individuals) was the locus of 'the many forms of trance, including meditation, as well as hyperkinetic behaviours.' The right hemisphere also validates spatial and limited temporal and tonal input, recognition of patterns, emotions, and other states in the internal milieu. It is holistic, synthesises thought but linguistic perception by it is limited. The left hemisphere processes speech as well as linear analytic thought, temporal units, (time) and receives information sequentially, thus it is concerned with logic more than emotion.

Following Orenstein's enigmatic lateralisation view, De Klerk and others render an explication of trance states based on: 'the differences in hemispheric functioning enables patients to perceive metaphors literally on the conscious level and understand their symbolic meanings on the unconscious level', where right and left hemispheres represent differing functions. The left perceives logical input, and the right the metaphorical, 'the metaphor slips into the unconscious sector and has an effect on cognition'.⁵⁷ Orenstein suggested that 'a shift from the time-binding, verbal, linear mode of thought into timeless, oceanic gestalt occurs. Although it adds greater complexity to an already intricate model of human neurobiology, it not only accords with Neher's research on auditory driving, but also provides an explanation for the subjective reports of temporal distortions and unusual sensations - often inexpressible experiences'.

⁵⁵ Steven T. Katz, ed. *Mysticism and Religious Traditions* (London: O.U.P., 1983), 99.

⁵⁶ Arthur J. Deikman, 'Experimental Meditation' in Charles Tart ed. *Altered States of Consciousness* (New York: John Wiley 1969), 199.

⁵⁷ J. E de Klerk, 'Healing through Imagery and Metaphors.' *Proceedings of the First Africa Congress on Hypnosis and Psychosomatic Medicine*. (Pretoria: SASCH. 1995), 31: 7.

The role of metaphor in altered states of consciousness derives from two 'triggers': 'the role of ritual, and the character of the mind'. Attwood and Levine define metaphor as 'that which carries from one place to another' as cited by De Klerk who maintain that 'phenomenologically, a metaphor is a persistent, habitual organisation, (pattern) of one or more of the following interrelated behaviours: images, words, emotions, postures and physical actions.'⁵⁸ He viewed a metaphor not only as a means of communication, but also as a 'method for facilitating change', through a verbal expression either in pictorial or verbal imagery, which changes the manner in which a subject perceives the world. 'The right hemisphere is the road to the unconscious and metaphors/imagery the vehicle'. Orenstein elicited that in certain meditation techniques, 'reduction of sensory input by means of a repetition of a *mantram*, a mellifluous sound, has the effect of monopolising the verbal-logical activities of the left hemisphere, leaving the right hemisphere to function freely. Conversely, response to the rhythms of chanting and singing, dancing, handclapping and percussion instruments, engages right hemisphere capabilities, evoking the 'timeless' quality of the attendant experience.

Based on the presence of *theta* waves and the absence of *alpha* waves during trance states, Kriegler cites Roxanne Lewis's findings on the 'entrainment' process whereby light and sound sensory stimulation altered brain wave activity. 'Certain light and sound wave frequencies produced trance-like states and experiences of mental imagery... this is done by stimulating the one ear with a 200 Hz tone, whilst the other ear receives 210Hz. The 'beat' frequency of 10Hz, and thus different beats, have been associated with increased suggestibility, improvement in immune function, better pain management, decreased frequency of migraine headaches and improvement in cognitive function.'⁵⁹ In this situation, we have a laboratory replication of Bushman trance dances, with sound of the singing, the rattles of the foot castanets, and the flickering light of the fire. Deikman had proposed a 'deautomatisation' of the cerebral structures, which Lex criticises, and states that it is analogous to the theory of laterisation, which however is not an adequate holistic attribution.

⁵⁸ J. E. De Klerk, *Proceedings of the SASCH*, (Pretoria:SASCH, 1995), 2.

⁵⁹ Susan Kriegler and Anne-Marie Wentzel. 'The Use of Light-Sound Technology in Hypnotherapy. *Proceedings*, (Pretoria :SASCH, 1995), 10: 2.

Remarkably, a similar model was proposed by a mystic, al-Muhasibi, (165-243/797-825).⁶⁰ In his theoretical model, he elucidated a triune structure of the 'mind' derived from the Qur'an, as being constituted by the *Ruh*, *Qalb* and *Nafs*, representing the 'soul', the rational mind, and the sensate levels respectively. Analogous to Deikman, but differing from the nature of dissociation which was cybernetic, al-Muhasibi asserted that dissociation between the lower portions results in a neurosis, whilst that in the upper levels results in psychoses, or a major form of an 'abnormal state'. Based on his theory, we have delineated the locus of revelation, dreams and the effects of the *Dhikr*, on these centres.⁶¹ Dissociation we regard as but differing states of consciousness, and need not be pathological, as seen in eastern mystics.⁶² Roland Fischer's system of classification of altered states of consciousness is based on a neurophysiological model, where states of consciousness are on a continuum, with a degree of central nervous arousal (ecstasy) *nirvana*, followed by complete relaxation or *samadhi*, has to be reviewed in view of the 'rebound phenomenon', which is established at the level of peripheral nerve stimulation, but has never been proven at a central level which is speculative insofar as consciousness is concerned.⁶³ A further problem is posed by the 'loop' construction to account for the 'rebound'. Bushell has shown that the absence of all sensory stimulation, which he terms REST (restriction of environmental stimulation) as seen in Ethiopian ascetics, confined to dark caves, resulted in opioid release.⁶⁴ The absence of all stimulation, as opposed to overstimulation in the Gelhorn thesis, poses a problem for the 'rebound' phenomenon.

Ludwig's classification of altered states of consciousness, following the

⁶⁰ Margaret Smith, *al-Muhasibi: An early Mystic of Bagdad* (London: O.U.P., 1934), 86-111.

⁶¹ G. M. Karim, *The Islamisation of Psychology*. Monograph prepared for the International Institute of Islamic Thought (USA) and presented at its Third World Conference held in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia. 1984. Also my paper presented at the Second World Conference on the Quran. 'Psychiatry in the Quran.' New Delhi. 1983.

⁶² M. J. Dols, *Majnun*, 23.

⁶³ Roland Fischer, 'Cartography of the Ecstatic and Meditative States.' in Richard Woods. ed. *Understanding Mysticism* (London: Athlone Press, 1980), 286-306.

⁶⁴ Bushell, *Thesis*, (1995b), 139.

psychobiological model, suggests that a characteristic was ineffability and memory disturbances, whilst Prince subsumed ritual trance phenomena 'under psychomotor amnesic states'.⁶⁵ Lex is critical of these positions. She states that ineffability, as well as the 'mystical' content of the imageries are products of interpretation within the verbal limits of the symbol system'. The current view is that recollection is only possible when it takes place at a similar level of consciousness as when the event is 'recorded-learnt', as educational psychologists have observed. Roland Fischer relates that in the film *City Lights* Charlie Chaplin saves a drunken millionaire from attempted suicide, who becomes his friend and promises a reward. When sober, he has no recollection of Charlie, but when drunk, revives his promise.⁶⁶ In their most recent *magnum opus* Laughlin et al., proposed a cybernetic model, based on 'transfer' of information across 'warps' which refers to differing phases of consciousness.⁶⁷

We concur with Barbara Lex that during rituals, it is not only the brain which receives stimulation, but the entire body through repetitive stimulation or 'more properly, entrainment'.... That symbolic meanings interact with the nervous systems to produce a trance: 'symbols and behaviour both result from excitation in neurophysiological structures and are associated with emotional states. Consequently while attempts to isolate one sector of an integrated neurobiological system, for other than heuristic purposes, are common, they are misleading distortions; 'since we are examining only a part of a complex interactive whole'.⁶⁸ The major system concerned with homeostasis in the internal milieu, the autonomic system reacts to changes in both extrasomatic and intrasomatic environment and depending on the nature of the stimulus, responds by the 'fight or flee' principle first enunciated by Hans Selye. If the former, it responds with an *ergotropic* reaction, i.e. an energy-expending behaviour,

⁶⁵ A. Ludwig, 'Altered States of Consciousness,' in Raymond Prince. ed. *Trance & Possession States*. (Montreal: R.M. Bucke Society, 1968).

⁶⁶ Roland Fischer, 'State-Bound Knowledge: I can't remember what I said last night, but it must have been Good.' in R. Woods, ed., *Understanding Mysticism* (London: Athlone Press, 1980), 307.

⁶⁷ Charles Laughlin, John McManus & Eugene d'Aquili. *Brain, Symbol and Experience*. (Boston: Shambhala Press, 1990), 141, 150.

⁶⁸ Barbara Lex, *Neurobiology*, 131.

by the secretion of epinephrine (adrenalin) which engenders a 'fight' response. If the latter, then the parasympathetic system (energy-sparing) comes into action, and causes the secretion of acetylcholine and serotonin, and engenders a 'pacifist' response. It is the pleasurable effects of these chemicals which cause a feeling of sleep, and relaxation. Following the 'homeostatic' theory the pioneers of this formulation were Gellhorn and Kiely.⁶⁹ Excess stimulation of the sympathetic system over a prolonged period can cause harm leading to hypertension, gastric ulcers, arrhythmia, depending upon age and nutritional condition and inability to cope with stress. The concept of Tuning enjoys popularity because it is partially valid, meeting with satisfactory answers in the past. Its failings are that the 'arousals' cannot be measured (then), cannot be verified nor disproved. Its principal laboratory or clinical measurement was by the EEG which showed *alpha* or *theta* waves. Brain activity as measured by the EEG is an epiphenomenon of an underlying biochemical process. As scientific knowledge is cumulative, it however does provide a baseline for integration into a holistic hypothesis which we are now in a position to formulate.

Triggers which alter states of consciousness

Neher and Needham were the first to report on the effect of sound in altering states of consciousness. 'Sound is a form of energy and thus influences consciousness'. This assisted us in the interpretation of a verse occurring in the Qur'an which is cardinal to the ritual of the *Ratib*, which challenges man: 'Does the remembrance of Allah not bring tranquillity to the hearts?' It is a constituent verse in the recital of the *Ratib* and it is one of the challenges of the Qu'ran which Hodgson has alluded to above. The plural *qulub* refers to a 'corporate social phenomenon', ideally represented in the *Ratib*, but differs from the Weberian notion of religion, in that *tasawwuf* is a form of personal piety.⁷⁰ Goldman cites the case of monks who fell ill after stopping their Gregorian chant and recovered only when the ritual was restored to their daily offices. This phenomenon was termed the Tomatis effect after the physician who

⁶⁹Charles D. Laughlin et al., *Brain, Symbol and Experience*, 313-316.

⁷⁰ Martin, *Islamic Studies*, 204.

correctly diagnosed the malady.⁷¹

Sound also effects physical changes as elicited in the incident concerning Rabia the famous woman mystic of Basra, who was released from slavery when her master saw her room illuminated during one of her night vigils. The phenomenon was thought to be legendary, until Goldman visiting a Maya temple, entered into a dark basement with a group of devotees, and while chanting, the room gradually lighted up, sufficiently for the group to see other. This may be explained as a normal physiological adaptive response of the eye to darkness, when the pupils dilate. But upon questioning the IBM researcher Marcel Vogel on crystallography, it was explained that when sound or current is applied to a crystal, it starts to oscillate leading to resonance. If it is vibrated at its constituent frequency, it will luminesce.⁷² Quartz crystals have an ability of transforming pulsed sound into light.⁷³ Sound was present in the dances of the Khoisan, produced by the 'foot castanets' made from ostrich egg shells, and the sound of the percussion instruments, the drums, and the rhythm of the dancing feet. In the Muslim rituals it was the sound of the *dhikr*, and the percussion of the drums in the *Ratib* whilst in the Hindu it was the mantra.

Goldman holds that the human voice is superior to any musical instrument since the larynx was capable of producing more harmonics. It had to be preceded by 'intentionality' to produce effects such as 'healing'. Whilst Goldman's focus is on healing, the basic reaction has an isomorphism with that of trance rituals. He said in an example of a philosophical approach that 'sound was a carrier wave of consciousness' - it carried the emotions and it is the intention which modulates the end result. His equation involves two elements for the transformation of the state of consciousness

⁷¹Nathan Goldman, *Healing Sounds*, 79. Dr Tomatis also proposed that the ear is superior than the eye in altering physiology, - a viewpoint in Islam, and one of the reasons for the Qur'an to be 'heard' rather than being 'read'. Neal Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text* (London: SCM Press, 1996), 11.

⁷²Desai, *Thesis*, (1993) cites the Sufi musician Inayat Khan proposing a similar explanation for the effect of music on physiology. Matter has a certain 'constituent' frequency, and when it is achieved, as by a soprano, a glass can shatter.

⁷³Jonathan Goldman, *Healing Sounds: The Power of Harmonics* (London:Element Books, 1996), 144.

which consists of intentionality and frequency of the sound. This has to be modified to include a third, most salient component, the 'cognitive matrix' which plays a major but diverse role according to 'intentionality'. We expand his equation within the context of *Dhikr* of the *Ratib* to be processual, rather than a static equation. When intention, linked with *Dhikr* (harmonics) acts on the 'Cognitive Matrix', it produces a physiological process involving the neuroendocrine elements in stimulating the Immune system, as a process of homeostasis.⁷⁴

The 'intentionality is fundamental to the production of the variant culturally conditioned response. This is dependant on the cosmology of the participant. Defective intentionality and nutritional status, as well as the reactivity of the nervous system, may result in an absence of a trance. Goldman reports his personal experience, when of two musicians playing an identical composition, only one produced a physiological effect. He attributed this to the fact, that one played 'mechanically' for his 'name and standing as a musician' whilst the other 'played for the love of music'. Electronic instruments do not have the same response as instruments played by hand.⁷⁵

He also attributes pain relief from music auditions as being due to 'toning' (harmonics) and stated that the analgesia was due to endorphins. Surprisingly, Felicitas Goodman also mentioned research being done on endorphins, but did not pursue the subject. Neither elicited details on the opioid production, or that they were the fundamental outcome of the harmonics. In the *Ratib*, the drums are specially prepared

⁷⁴ Intentionality is an important element as seen in Stanley Lane Poole's experience in Egypt. He joined a group performing the *hadra* and 'all he felt was the heat and sweating' and had no alteration in his state of consciousness. Thus harmonics alone did not produce any effect, and intentionality depends on the cognitive matrix, which is culturally conditioned. An international panel, of which the author is a participant, is investigating the epochal findings of Diana Deutsch, Professor of Psychology at the University of California, on what she terms the 'Tritone Paradox'. She observed a striking variation between the perception of sounds between English-speaking subjects in America and born English speaking inhabitants of Britain. The tritone is the interval between two computer produced tones that are related by a half-octave. When one tone of a pair is played, followed by the second, some people hear an ascending note, whilst others hear a descending pattern. The author is investigating this effect on responses of Muslim and Hindu subjects compared with that of white subjects. Diana Deutsch. *Musical illusions and Paradoxes*. CD produced by Philomel. Records. Box 12189 La Jolla. CA 92039-2189. Also her forthcoming second edition of *The Psychology of Music*. (1982). 'Paradoxes of Musical Pitch.' *Scientific American*. (1992) Vol. 267, no. 2 : 88-95.

⁷⁵ Jonathan Goldman, *Healing Sounds*, 146.

for producing harmonics, by being heated.⁷⁶ Whilst Shahsaheb used the vellum from ritually slaughtered animals, he found that imported tambourines were superior in efficacy. Goldman also attributes a cardinal role of harmonics in altering consciousness.

Towards a neurochemical theory

Cecilia Kourie dealing with 'recent issues' in the study of mysticism, summated that most of the studies were from a 'critical-analytical philosophical' aspect, concerned with description, taxonomy, and relationship between the experience and its interpretation.⁷⁷ Following contemporary trends, our approach is from the neurobiological, and follows Bushell who utilised a cybernetic model in the study of altered states of consciousness. He assigned the term 'hardware' to the neurosensory system, whilst the 'software' was constituted by the affective or cognitive system.⁷⁸ Every theory needs further elaboration and presents new problems, and the validation of our hypothesis is based at both a cellular level, i.e. haematological and at a biochemical level, which is both replicable and verifiable in a laboratory. Barbara Lex was prophetic when she asserted that 'in spite of the fact that the Autonomic Nervous system has been relegated to subsidiary status' since it is assigned an autonomic function, it plays an 'integral role in states of ritual trance', in that it is interdependent with other systems of the body.

Our proposed theory on the nexus between trance rituals and altered states of consciousness does attempt an advance on the above remarks, since according to the focus of the biogenetic structuralist school, the primary function of ritual is that of adaptation. Adaptation is mediated by the immune system, which is the primal defence system of the body and whose central role in physiology is one of homeostasis. Bushell has demonstrated the involvement of what he terms the 'opiatergic' system in ascetic rituals, and in his proposals for a new theory on asceticism he found that endogenous opioids were responsible for many of the phenomena and physical signs of

⁷⁶Desai, *Thesis*, 204, 332.

⁷⁷Celia Kourie, *Recent Issues*, 131.

⁷⁸Bushell, *Thesis*, (1995b), 31.

integration of the brain, with the endocrine and immune systems.⁸²

The cardinal role of the immune system in stress

Leonard affirms the role of stress on the organism, 'irrespective of its cause, is instrumental in causing profound changes in the immune and endocrine systems and the brain. All forms of stress result in the activation of the pituitary-adrenal axis, with a rise in catechol amines and glucocorticoid hormones from the adrenal gland'. The secretion of adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) from the pituitary gland...triggers the secretion of adrenal corticoids from the adrenal gland'. The hypothalamus-pituitary - gonadal axis has been described by Bushell under an extensive bibliography.⁸³ While it is widely accepted that opioids are produced during ascetic *praxes*, our study is an advance in showing the association between the mind through behaviour, since psychology is defined as the study of behaviour, and the immune system which is a sensory system concerned with maintaining homeostasis by defending the body against not only microbes, toxins, pain, but also stress.

Bushell states that human studies of psychoneuroendocrinology of consciousness is technically difficult.⁸⁴ However, although conscious states and their interpretation differ vastly amongst the various traditions, the neurobiological reaction is identical and amenable to laboratory analysis. The discipline of psycho-neuroimmunology currently embraces that of the endocrine system as well, and certain products of the immune system, such as lymphokines have been shown to function as endocrines. Sedulous studies of the psycho-neuroimmune systems have revealed a cornucopia of information affecting the normal and pathological in both physical and psychological 'states' of the body.

Conditioning of the Immune System

Until recently, it was not thought possible that the Immune System could be conditioned, i.e. that it had a link to the mind, despite the fact that neural connections

⁸² B. E. Leonard. 'Depression and the Immune System' in *Psychiatry in Practice*. Vol. 3 no. 1 (Cape Town Helm Publishers, 1996), 26-28. The article first appeared in *International Psychiatry Today*. Vol 3(2). 1993. (Dept of Pharmacology. University College Galway. Ireland).

⁸³ Bushell, *Thesis*, (1995b), 216.

⁸⁴ Bushell, *Thesis*, (1995b), 19.

within the elements of the Immune system were well documented. The serendipitous finding of two experimental psychologists, Ader and Cohen on the extinction of the learning process proved that the immune system can be conditioned.⁸⁵ Merle Friedman, writing in 1990 opined 'this was a finding no serious medical practitioner would ever entertain.'⁸⁶ They conducted a taste aversion experiment by feeding rats a saccharine solution and simultaneously administered a nausea inducing drug, cyclophosphamide by injection. After the first dose, the rats associated the nausea to the drink and avoided the drink. To establish how long it took for the learned response to be ablated, they fed them the saccharine solution again, but without the cyclophosphamide. Some of the rats drank and some did not. Those who drank, became ill and died from withering of the immune system, whilst those who did not drink, survived, showing that it was not the cyclophosphamide that was operating. The problem is ofcourse that cyclophosphamide itself is an immunosuppresant, but how could the effect of one dose be evident after a long time. They deduced that immunosuppression was conditioned and that immunosuppression was thus a learned response.

To test this hypothesis they conducted trials on New Zealand rats who are prone to lupus erythromatosis (murine type). Using the same technique, they prolonged the life of their subjects. Since Lupus Erythromatosis is an auto-immune disease, this finding was of great significance and led to frenzied activity amongst both psychologists and immunologists.⁸⁷ It is acknowledged that endocrine factors and the nervous system affect the immune system.

Naude defines Psychoneuroimmunology as the 'interaction between mind and body to produce health and healing. Health and healing are information based: when

⁸⁵ R. Ader & N. Cohen, *Psychoneuroimmunology* (New York: Academic Press, 1981)

⁸⁶Merle Friedman, 'Psychoneuroimmunology.' in *S. A. Family Practice* Vol. 11, 7. (July 1990), 350-354.

⁸⁷ R. Ader & N. Cohen, 'Behaviourally conditioned immunosuppression and Murine systemic lupus erythrematosis.' in *Science*. Vol. 215, (1982), 1534-6.

Hindu, and the *Ratib* of the Malay exiles, all communities suffering stress and employing ritual for its resolution. Groups under stress tend to rely on authority figures or leaders for guidance, as is seen by the leader in the Bushman, the Imam or *murshid* in the *Ratib* and the *guru* in the *Kavadi*. Lynn Wilcox, Professor of Psychology at California State University, Sacramento, affirms that the methods now being utilised in psychoneuroimmunology have been used effectively by *Sufism* for centuries', one case is that of assisting AIDS patients to stay healthy.⁹²

The Imam has a significant role in Muslim society in alleviating stress.⁹³ It is he who renders the society sufficiently 'elastic' or flexible to cope by altering ritual with changing social environments. The Imams also played a role in healing by means of the sacred word *Azimat*.⁹⁴ One of the descendants of Tuan Guru, a title, which Richard Elphick and Robert Shell translate as 'Lord' and 'Teacher' whereas it refers to the spiritual Master in *tasawwuf*, has a book on 'Islamic law, customs and mystical rites', which 'on translation will provide a useful insight into the embryonic Muslim community in the eighteenth century'.⁹⁵ D'Aquili is convinced that 'where the society is 'brittle' it 'cracks', and since rituals provide homeostasis, Muslims have five 'secret' tools in their daily rituals ranging from reading the Qur'an to the *Salat*, *Dhikr*, Fasting, certain *awrad* or litanies and its social structure which assist in resolving stress, based on the principle of reliance and calling upon a higher power for assistance during hardship.⁹⁶ 'In the absence or failure of effective leadership, the society fragments.' This

⁹²Lynn Wilcox, *Sufism and Psychology* (Chicago: Abjad Press, 1995), 41.

⁹³G. M. Karim. 'Coping with Stress in Islam.' Paper presented at the Seminar on Religion and Stress Management held in Johannesburg (1989) by the National Council for Mental Health.. Also delivered at the Congress on Islamic Medicine held at Teheran University in 1992. G. Lubbe states that it is the 'mosque and the *imam* which are the two elements' serving as rallying points for the community in its battle for survival in an alien environment. G. Lubbe, *Soweto Fatwa*, 336.

⁹⁴Gerrie Lubbe, (1997).

⁹⁵Richard Elphick & Hermann Giliomee, eds. *The Shaping of South African Society. 1652-1840* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman, 1989), 192.

⁹⁶The five 'tools' are the five daily prayers, the recitations of the Qur'an, the *Tasbeeh* of the Prophet's daughter (a *dhikr*), the ninety nine Names, and the social structure of Islam, such as extended families, (old age homes are frowned upon), early 'arranged' marriages lead to the lowest
(continued...)

is probably the reason for the Dutch government sending into exile, the religious leaders of the countries they had colonised, purportedly for 'political activities'. This may also account for the fact that the British government wanted to ban critical Kikuyu rituals in Kenya they perceived to be in competition with their own.⁹⁷ The authorities attempted to ban the *Ratib* in South Africa by appointing the Roubaix Commission to investigate the validity of the *Chalifa (Ratib)* as an Islamic ritual. The reasons advanced in the literature of the time was that it 'was causing a public disturbance', and it was supported by some unwary imams, who claimed that 'it brought disgrace to our religion'.

In 1855, the *Kavadi* in India was also under a similar threat.⁹⁸ William Gladstone, the Prime Minister faced with challenges from the Ottoman Empire, holding high the Qur'an in his hand, declared in the House of Commons: 'So long as there is this Book, there will be no peace in the world'.⁹⁹ He had correctly appraised that the Qur'an as ritual was a power resource. We are in a position to substantiate Bushell's remark that ascetic rituals are a profound resource endowed to man. D'Aquili describes the 'Bushman as 'models of ideal Cosmological and Social Reality'. 'In societies in which cosmological and social harmony are perceived to be isomorphic, ritual functions to model ideal, harmonious reality in both. In simple societies that exhibit little social differentiation, ritual may appear so undifferentiated as to be overlooked as ritual. A perfect example may be found in the 'dance' and 'talk' of the Bushman.' These rituals are the healing dance, and when 'tensions and hostilities are openly voiced in the group living area. Bushman dances emphasize the harmony of the cosmos and re-enact social

⁹⁶(...continued)

percentage of divorce or marital dysfunctions, respect for elders, teachers, and behaviour based on the *uswah*, the precedent set by the prophet, which leave no room for doubt about correct behaviour at any given time.

⁹⁷C. G. Rosberg & J. Nottingham, *The Myth of the Mau-Mau* (Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1966) cited in D'Aquili. (1979), 313.

⁹⁸Alleyn Diesel & Patrick Maxwell, *Hinduism in Natal* (Pietermaritzburg: Univ. Natal Press, 1993), 54.

⁹⁹Akbar S. Ahmed, *Postmodernism and Islam*. (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 182.

harmony.¹⁰⁰

The sociopsychological functions of the *Ratib*

The *Ratib*, by inducing an altered state of consciousness, led to homeostasis of the personality for the slaves, and it ensured devotionism. It was a core ritual of the early Muslims for at least a century. It played a major role in relieving mental stress, societal as well as individual, led to Brotherhood and belonging for the dispossessed and for those in bondage it offered hope. Its role in resolution of Stress to which the slaves were exposed and which enabled them to survive harsh conditions was not recognised. It led also to the mass conversion of the slaves which has also been overlooked as a function of the *Ratib*.

The ritual brought out the 'power of faith over the flesh', it was at once awesome, and mysterious, and an overwhelming display for non-Muslim slaves to convert to Islam. Other customs and traditions besides the *Rawatibs*, with food distribution, the dignified Muslim burials where the dead were interred in deep graves, rather than shallow graves to be desecrated by animals, induced many slaves to accept Islam as a way of life. Islamic ethos and rituals was a factor overlooked by Shell in his study of conversion to Islam.¹⁰¹ Trimmingham verifies this by observing that it was the rituals rather than dogma which made Africans convert to Islam, despite the efforts of the Christian missionaries.¹⁰² Nadvi is emphatic that there are three causes for the spread of Islam in Africa, of which the first cause is 'Islam itself' referring to the status of equality and dignity conferred on its recipients, whilst the second were traders and the third the benign and social service of the *Sufis*, in adopting street children and

¹⁰⁰D'Aquili, *Spectrum*, 303.

¹⁰¹ R.C-H Shell, 'From Rites to Rebellion: Islamic Conversion at the Cape 1808-1915' in *Studies in the History of Cape Town*. Vol. 5. (Cape Town: Centre for African Studies. 1984). Abused white women found ready shelter and support from Muslims who did not succumb to alcohol. When these women wanted to marry Muslims, the wedding rituals were changed to accommodate European customs. A contemporary example is Yvette Ina Coetzee, born and educated in Bloemfontein, and one time Chairman of the Students Christian Union at the University of the Free State who found freedom in the *hijab*, and converted to Islam after being discontented with certain Christian dogma. She is now Yasmine Raadia Coetzee, the middle name signifying contentment which she says she found in Islam. (YOU magazine March 1997) and Muslim Mirror. April. 1997.

¹⁰² S. J. Trimmingham, *The Influence of Islam in Africa*. (London: O.U.P., 1968), 104.

providing shelter to abused white women.¹⁰³

It is important to note that the adaptative functions are responsible for the creativity displayed by the mystics in all fields, eg Ibn Arabi, Ibn Sina, and many calligraphers, artists, writers and architects in the Islamic world, whilst William Blake, Huxley, Mozart, are but a few examples in the western. Amongst the scientists were Niels Bohr, Kekule and Aristotle.

The Cape Muslims have been acknowledged by Laurence van der Post, amongst others as having contributed greatly to the arts and crafts and prosperity of the Cape.¹⁰⁴ They also gave birth to a new language, Afrikaans, as reflected in the many works of Achmat Davids.¹⁰⁵ 'In its capacity to model ideal social-cosmological reality, ritual becomes a source of collective action', as demonstrated in the Islamic ritual of congregational prayer (*Salat*), which accords with D'Aquili's observation that 'myth' and attendant ritual operate to 'code' proper action, which is also adaptively significant action as a response to stress.¹⁰⁶

When the individual is under psychological stress, and has no 'guide' or method in rituals, the personality 'disintegrates', resulting in a loss of power which manifests as 'possession'. Drawing upon Desai's observation that the *Ratib* is an altered physiological state, and should be studied as a psychophysiological phenomenon, we have sufficient grounds to suggest that the endogenous opioid peptides are actively related to trance ritual and possession states.

¹⁰³S. Salman Nadvi, 'Real Causes for the Spread of Islam' in *Religion in Southern Africa*. Vol 3, no. 1:37. He concurs with Ali Kettani that the 'first thing they did was to build a mosque'. At the Cape, the early Muslims survived for over a century without a mosque being allowed.

¹⁰⁴ G. M. Karim, 'The Contributions of Muslims to South African Culture.' in *BICMURA* Vol. 2, no. 1, (Birmingham: 1984), 1 : 1-10.

¹⁰⁵Achmat Davids, 'The Words the Slaves made: A Socio-historical-Linguistic Study.' in *South African Journal of Linguistics*. Vol. 8, no. 1, (1990), 1-24 Refer to his Masters Thesis. University Natal. 1993.

¹⁰⁶ Summarising the stand of D'Aquili et al., Turner stated that 'human beings have no choice but to construct myths to explain their world,' to orient themselves 'in what often appears to be a capricious universe.' Victor Turner, 'Body, Brain and Culture' in *Zygon* Vol.18, (3 Sept.1983), 221-46.

Endorphin release as a cause of trance

There are three distinct families of the endogenous opioid peptides, the *enkephalins*, the *endorphins* and the *dynorphins*. It is mainly the endorphines which are produced by rituals. The peptides from prodynorphin and proenkephalin are widely distributed in the central nervous system, in the area presumably related to the perception of pain. The absence of pain during the trance Rituals, notably fire-walking and other stabbing ceremonies; the modulation of consciousness and the influence on affective behaviour, and on the Autonomic Nervous Systems, led to Gelhorn's postulating the 'tuning hypothesis', of the *ergotropic* and *trophotropic* phases to account for the biphasic response of stimulation and tumescence during trance rituals. Bushell has clearly demonstrated the role of the hypothalamic-endocrine-gonadal systems, i.e. the Adreno-cortical and neuroendocrinal. It is intense or continuous repetitive stimulation, which causes gastric ulcers in the physical dimension and in the psychological as 'nervous diarrhoea' before exams and periods of stress, and as possession states, when inability to cope occurs.¹⁰⁷ Anorexia nervosa displays a high level of opioids, which denotes a continuous generation of opioids due to stress, which cause profound anorexia and hence the cure would be naloxone.¹⁰⁸

Jerome H Jaffe and William Martin state that: 'the elucidation of the physiological role of the opioid peptides has been made more difficult by their frequent co-existence with other putative neurotransmitters within a given neurone.'¹⁰⁹ This problem can be resolved if a haematological approach is utilised. Because certain secular activity also leads to a rise in endorphins, as detailed by Noakes, in the so-called 'runners high' is probably due to the rise in circulating monocytes during exercise.¹¹⁰ However this was questioned by European workers such as Henrik Galbo in

¹⁰⁷J.H. Jaffe and W.R. Martin, 'Opioid Analgesics and Antagonists' in A. Goodman Gillman et al., eds. *Goodman and Gillman's The Pharmacological basis of Therapeutics*. 9th ed. (New York: Pergamon, 1995), 485-521.

¹⁰⁸R. Tepper, A. Wizman, A. Apter et al., 'Elevated plasma immunoreactive b-endorphine in anorexia nervosa.' *Clinical Neuropharmacology*. Vol. 15, (1992), 387-91.

¹⁰⁹ R. Tepper, et. al., (1992), 486.

¹¹⁰ Tim Noakes, *Lore of Running* (London: O.U.P., 1991), 599-600.

his article in 'Endurance in Sport' who states that the reputation of beta endorphines and other endogenous opioid peptides is based on myth'. But recent work by Dickson, Wilkinson and Noakes affirms that monocytes, the mediators of endorphine secretion, increase strongly during exercise.¹¹¹ The studies of Farrel, Gates, Muksud et al. have affirmed that increases in plasma beta endorphines occur after treadmill running.¹¹²

William Bushell's doctoral thesis 'Psychophysiological and Cross cultural Dimensions of Ascetico-Meditational Practices: Special Reference to the Christian Hermits of Ethiopia and Applications to Theory in Anthropology and Religious Studies.' (1995b) and his contribution to a *magnum opus* entitled *Asceticism* substantiates our entire perspective.¹¹³ He proposed a new theory on the functions of asceticism and altered states of consciousness, which substantiates at a phenomenological level our propositions, and provides a sound basis for our own advance and substantiation of his findings at both a cellular as well as biochemical level. The haematological verification of endorphin release could be the basis of a further project in Immunology, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.¹¹⁴

Likewise, the therapeutic aspects, by either generating opioids, or cancelling its action by opioid antagonists, ranges over many disciplines and areas such as dermatology, psychiatry, post traumatic stress syndromes, nephritides, arthritides, asthma to cancer, impotence in men, diabetes to anorexia and Aids.¹¹⁵ Since the

¹¹¹Dickson, Wilkinson and T. Noakes. 'Effects of Endurance Exercise on the Immune Response.' in Int. Jnl of Sports Medicine. Vol. 3, (1986), 111-117.

¹¹²P. A. Farrell, W.K. Gates, M.G. Muksud et al., 'Increases in plasma b-endorphine/b-lipoprotein immunoreactivity after treadmill running in humans.' *Journal of Applied Physiology*. Vol. 52, (1982), 1245-49.

¹¹³ William C Bushell, 'Psychophysiological and Comparative Analysis of Ascetico-Meditational Discipline: Toward a New Theory of Asceticism.' in *Asceticism* eds. Vincent L. Wimbush & Richard Valantasis, (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995), 554-575.

¹¹⁴ By performing haematological tests pre and post performance, with estimations of endorphine levels in the devotees of the *Ratib*. A recent development measures opioids in urine by a 'dip-stick' technique, which is inexpensive and takes two minutes. (Boehringer-Mannheim Labs.)

¹¹⁵Bushell describes a case of a diabetic whose need for insulin decreased, and another case whilst under the influence of 'opioid' generation, showed no reaction in his blood sugar levels
(continued...)

opioids influence the immune system, they have a role in the prevention of organ transplant rejection. Sports performances can be augmented. In the corporate business sector, numerous consultants have utilised methods of opioid generation to increase productivity and organisational activity.¹¹⁶ However their methods are derived from outcomes based on the electroencephalographic changes, alpha and theta waves which are an epiphenomenon of the endorphin reaction.

Ritual and Revitalisation movements

Trance rituals in the three traditions in the South African context draw upon traditional resources as 'revitalisation movements in modern situations of social crisis' fully subscribing to David Chidester's inspired conclusion to his contribution 'Primal Religions' in de Grunchy and Prozesky's *Guide*: 'When they have provided spiritual resources for people suffering under colonial, imperial or other forms of foreign domination and deprivation, primal religions have generated ways of being human that draw together old traditions and new innovations under extreme conditions of dehumanisation.' This is fully represented in the study of the three traditions under purview.

Revitalisation movements have not merely been introverted retreats to a lost traditional world; they have also represented new strategies for working out meaning and power- new ways of being human under dehumanising conditions, primal religion has appeared as both the oldest and the newest religions of the world.¹¹⁷ This accords with the *sophia perennis* school which is synonymous with 'esotericism' (seen as total truth), and traditional philosophy of Platonism and Thomism.

William Stoddart maintains that esotericism is not the enemy of revealed religion, and cites Schuon on the merits and function of esotericism: 'just as rationalism

¹¹⁵(...continued)

after imbibing a glass of sugar water. (1995b),29. His bibliography is a valuable resource for further investigation of the beneficial effects of opioids in the various diseases listed.

¹¹⁶John Richard Napier Broome, 'Stress Management and Organisation development: Effects of transcendental meditation on psychological, physiological, and organisational variables at the worksite.' Ph. D. dissertation. University of Cape Town. April 1995.

¹¹⁷ De Grunchy and Prozesky, (1991),13.

can remove faith, esoterism can restore it'.¹¹⁸ This study demonstrates that Islam has institutionalised and integrated esotericism in its ritual structures based on the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. Schuon defines esotericism as '*apriori* doctrine or methods that are more or less secret because they are regarded as transcending the limited capacities of average men', which accords with Luckmann's definition of religion.

Our study, reveals that rituals serve as an interface between the shaman, the ascetic and mystic, who inculcate religious experience by utilising 'techniques' for altering states of consciousness. Prophets are endowed with revelation in its variant forms, such as dreams, which Izutsu differentiates from shamanism by insisting that it is an experience with what Ninian Smart called the *numinous*.¹¹⁹

Possession and trance states are but diverse interpretations of altered states of consciousness. The salience of this equation enables a holistic appraisal of the transformative effects of rituals as well as the therapeutic benefits in bettering the life of both the individual and of society and suggests that the information and knowledge gained by this study should be utilised in greater measure for relieving stress and alleviating pain and suffering. It supports the imperative necessity of creating a spirit of belief, a return to the Sacred through devotionism in the coming millennium.

¹¹⁸William Stoddart in his Introduction to *In Quest of the Sacred*, eds. S.H. Nasr and Kathleen O'Brien, (Oakton, VA: FTS Press, 1994), 11. Also Frithjof Schuon, *Esoterism as Principle and as Way*, (Middlesex: Perennial Books, [1981] 1990), 8.

¹¹⁹While held in detention during 1966, under the stressful conditions of prison, when no conversation with any other detainee was permitted, I was continually engaged in *Dhikr* and thus not available for conversation during the few surreptitious minutes when an opportunity to do so occurred, I was prevailed upon by a fellow detainee to stop praying since prayer could not help our situation which had to follow the legal process. I decided to forego prayers, and read the only material allowed which were tedious novels. His closing words were that 'no power' could get us out excepting for the Special Branch. That night I had a dream in which I saw a reproaching verse in beautiful calligraphy of the Quran: "Surely Allah has power over everything". I had doubts about His power. The difference between opioid generated states and the encounter with the Numinous' can only be proven by personal experience. Although intentionality is required in achieving altered states of consciousness, the experience was *sui generis*.

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